THEATRE AND ANTI-THEATRE IN THE PLAYS OF HAROLD PINTER

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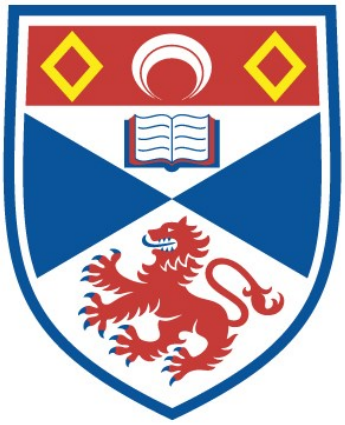

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IN

THE PLAYS OF HAROLD PINTER

BY

HASSAN AYOUBI

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ABSTRACT

This is an analytical study of Harold Pinter's drama in the light of its reconciliation of elements culled from the symbolic anti-theatre movements that have flourished on the continent (especially in France) and elements from the British tradition of realistic drama. This reconciliation has added new forms of expression to the English theatre but has often prevented the playwright from adding new depths to either the symbolic or the realist trends.

The first part of this thesis sets out the general characteristics of both trends. A brief survey of the works of Mallarme, Maeterlinck, Jarry, the Futurists, the Dadaists and the Surrealists is offered to show the development of certain negative currents in the theatre that rejected much that was taken for granted in traditional Western culture and formulated a convention that strongly negated the traditional norms of the theatre. Some emphasis is laid on the later developments of this trend as seen in the works of Eugene Ionesco, Peter Handke and especially Samuel Beckett, who is taken as an exemplar of anti-theatre. As a contrast to this trend, the "plays of character" of Noel Coward and Terence Rattigan are studied as representative of the

popular tradition in British drama.

In the second part an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of Pinter's blending of the two trends is carried out on his plays. His early works are represented by The Birthday Party, The Caretaker, The Homecoming and Old Times, which stand for different stages in the development of his art. Emphasis is also laid on his late works: No Man's Land, Betrayal, Monologue, Other Places, the sketch Precisely and the recent short play One for the Road.

This study shows that anti-theatre is only a theatrical convention in Pinter's work and that his art is deeply rooted in tradition. As a result of the duality in his art, the vision he culls from anti-theatre is blurred by his realistic depiction, while this depiction itself lacks the social, psychological and moral values inherent in the realistic tradition. However, in a number of plays Pinter succeeds in exploiting the experimental forms of anti-theatre for depicting effective realistic situations and he has recently shown greater interest in the clarity of realism.

A NOTE ON THE TEXT

Quotations from Harold Pinter's works are taken from the four-volume Eyre Methuen 'Master Playwrights' edition (listed in the Bibliography). Roman numerals refer to the particular volume, Arabic to the particular page.

Since Pinter makes frequent use of the ellipsis for dramatic effect, I have used square brackets [...] in quotations from him, to indicate where words have been omitted by me.

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"If you press me for a definition, I'd say that what goes on in my plays is realistic, but what I'm doing is not realism". (II, 11) This is how Harold Pinter has rightly defined his type of writing. The definition was made in 1961, but it is perhaps true of most of his work. Pinter's plays usually begin by creating familiar situations about recognizable people. These people live their daily life in ordinary places and at specified times. The action renders minute details of the commonplace and the language often resembles everyday conversations. Yet all these realistic elements soon falter and invite fantasy: the situation gets out of hand as the audience discovers that it is watching people wearing multi-layered masks; the whole atmosphere changes as if the characters are not living in a specific society; bizarre elements are introduced and the language becomes full of puzzles. The realistic and the bizarre are then interwoven in one theatrical game, as if the natural

and the imaginative can be played to the same set of rules. As a result, his plays, as Guido Almansi and Simon Henderson have rightly observed, "belong quite clearly to a line of perversely well-made plays. (Isn't it perverse to write a play *a la* Beckett as well-made as a boulevard vaudeville or a Noel Coward farce? Yet this is what Pinter does)".[1] This blending of the two completely different types of drama of Coward and Beckett, and the trends they represent, is a central issue of argument in this research. It is a study of how Harold Pinter has stripped the drama of the British tradition of much of its emotional and intellectual contents and imbued it with reduced, abstract and negative images.

- II -

In his book *Theatre and Anti-Theatre: New Movements Since Beckett*, Ronald Hayman asserts that: "the development of the theatre since Beckett has been more anti-literary and more influenced by anti-art than has generally been recognised. An aversion to current practices in literature, art and the theatre has inspired an alternative method of procedure".[2] Hayman points to traces of this anti-theatre in the works of Harold Pinter, Tom Stoppard, Edward Albee and Sam Shepard. Using the same argument, but applying it

to poetry, Alan Young comes to a conclusion similar to Hayman's. In his book Dada and After, Young shows how the English rejected Dada and Surrealism until the 1940s. He then argues that cynicism and nihilism eventually found their way into English literature after the Second World War. He looks at the neo-dada in the post-war arts, and then concludes that a "joyless, violent and destructive spirit, one which has tended to be anti-human and despairing about the future, has permeated the arts".[3] Harold Pinter with his "hate-filled plays" is cited as one instance of this cultural perversion. THe arguments of Hayman and Young encourage a study of these anti-art movements and the dramatists that are inspired by their negating spirit, to see how much, and in what way, they have influenced Harold Pinter. To identify the drama of such movements the rubric "anti-theatre" will be applied.

Categorization has its own limitations and dangers, yet it is often necessary to help us to arrange our information and to arrive at a workable general overview of the subject in our minds. Whenever we assign a literary work to one category rather than to another, we should bear in mind that each individual author has his own personality and each work its own characteristics. Moreover, categories often overlap

and objective criticism must point out such overlapping. Without this flexible attitude misunderstanding is inevitable. Martin Esslin, who coined the term "The Theatre of the Absurd" in 1961, later found himself misunderstood and had to defend himself against this misunderstanding. In the revised edition of his book The Theatre of the Absurd, in 1968, he says:

> A term like Theatre of the Absurd is a working hypothesis, a device to make certain fundamental traits which seem to be present in the works of a number of dramatists accessible to discussion by tracing the features they have in common. That and no more. How could that have led to the assumption that Beckett and Ionesco should behave towards each other as members of the same club or party? Or that Pinter subscribed to the same views on politics or law as Genet? Only by a profound misunderstanding.[4]

It is in this flexible sense that I am using the term "anti-theatre". It is a working hypothesis; like "the Theatre of Bewilderment", or of "Inertia", or of "the Grotesque", or the terms "metatheatre" or "Lunar drama".[5] It is one of the labels attached to the works of Beckett and Ionesco and those who have followed their dramatic lines. Of course, each of these terms has its own shades of meaning and the usefulness of each term can be appreciated best in the context in which it is used. The term anti-theatre expresses more deeply than the others the negative

tendencies in contemporary drama and also indicates clearly its opposition to the traditional theatre. The title "theatre and anti-theatre" points to the way in which Pinter's plays swing to and fro between realism and abstractionism or between the traditional use of the theatre (as represented, for example, by Noel Coward and Terence Rattigan) and the experimental "anti-theatre" (as represented by Samuel Beckett). The term "anti-theatre" is also useful because it helps to make clear the fact that this type of theatre is the result of the various manifestations of the anti-art movements of our age. The cynical, agnostic and pessimistic spirit that has penetrated the arts has led to the rejection of conventions and norms and to the sarcastic parody of traditional elements of art and often to the elimination of most of these elements. If we understand "anti-theatre" as the product of the anti-artistic tendencies that have been manifested in modern theatre, we shall see the sense in which the theatre of the absurd, itself, becomes a part of anti-theatre. Esslin indicates this when he says:

> The theatre of the absurd is thus part of the "anti-literary" movement of our time, which has found its expression in abstract painting, with its rejection of "literary" elements in pictures; or in the "new novel" in France, with its reliance on the description of objects and its rejection of empathy and anthropomorphism.[6]

In other words,"anti-theatre" encompasses more than the theme of the absurdity of the world; it, for example, embraces the formalism of contemporary playwrights such as Peter Handke, who repudiates most forms of writing. Handke, as will be explained in Chapter One, rejects even the descriptive and narrative functions of the sentence. His Offending the Audience [7] retains almost nothing of the traditional elements of the drama except the faint element of suspense which the audience feels as to what will come out of the play. But, to its dismay, the audience discovers at the end that it was the target of the play and that nothing that was expected has happened.

Moreover, the application of some of Antonin Artaud's theories of the theatre shows us how the attempt to uproot existing theatre conventions has been so successful that it has fathered a parallel set of conventions (or "anti-conventions"). In the anti-theatre of Artaud and the directors who follow his theories the visual becomes more prominent and the word is often reduced in status until it becomes merely a sound. "The growth of art into anti-art and literature into anti-literature," says Ronald Hayman, "has ensued on the abandonment of representation, the cult of the aleatory, the refusal to continue the dialogue with

the audience."[8] The works of Peter Brook and Joseph Chaikin are practical examples of the new trend that has resulted from this spirit. It is the spirit that is ready to challenge the playwright and minimize or even, if possible, abolish his role, giving instead a "collective" creation by a group of people or an invention by the director himself.[9] Again, it is the spirit that challenges the convention of a seated audience and makes the members of the audience stand and share in the performance, or invites or forces them to move with the actors from one place to another, in the outside world.[10]

Again, the term "anti-theatre" is a suitable one to apply to Samuel Beckett's dramatic output. In his later works, especially after Endgame(1957), Beckett has come to the extreme of abolishing any dialogue between one character and another, as he did in Krapp's Last Tape (1958) and Not I (1973), for example. Later, in Quad (1982), he not only abolishes language but makes the performers mere walkers without identity. We might say that he has achieved his longing for a drama without characters, without the need for an actor in the professional sense. J.L. Styan finds Beckett's late plays sterile:

> These plays and others which have confined actors in burial urns or have reduced them physically to a pair of lips moving in the dark, begin to deny the need for the actor, or even the theatre itself. The operation of symbolism may in this way have sharply simplified the work of the stage, but one suggests that such anti-theatre is cold comfort for the future development of dramatic art.
>
> It is perhaps fortunate therefore that Beckett has proved to be inimitable.[11]

It is clear, however, that now that Beckett has acquired his reputation he is ready to go as far as he wishes in his experimental use of the stage and the audio-visual media. By giving life to dead aspects of theatre, he might give a chance to coming generations of playwrights to invest in these aspects and use them for their own purposes. Have not the early plays of Beckett shocked and influenced a number of writers of whom Harold Pinter is only one example? It is true that Pinter's experiments show that it is difficult to imitate the philosophical reductionism and abstractionism of Beckett's drama, yet they also show that Beckett's techniques, such as the use of the one-actor play and the use of disconnected reveries, can be comfortably employed, especially if they are imbued with emotions. Beckett's anti-theatre, as will be shown, is the model for a number of successful poetic plays written by Pinter: Landscape(1968),

Silence(1969), Monologue(1973) and Other Places(1982).

- III -

The European conventions that Harold Pinter has introduced to the British tradition have been the subject matter of most of the critical studies about his theatre. The new elements have become characteristic of his art and have overshadowed the traditional origin of his theatrical creativity, especially in the study of character. This emphasis on the new is natural, especially since the new elements in his work show some disrespect for the norms of traditional writing. The study of the conventions which Pinter has culled from the European experiments becomes more revealing to his art if it is analyzed against the traditional elements that form the basis of his drama. It is especially so because Pinter has chosen to introduce elements from the negative currents that have flourished on the continent and have been resisted by the English for so long.

The best exemplar of the conventions that Pinter has leaned on is Samuel Beckett, but to understand the spirit of anti-theatre and the different themes, structures and techniques that have been employed by its exponents one has

to have a look at its developments since the beginning of this century. Beckett would not have created his classics without the experiments of Mallarme, Maeterlinck, Jarry, the Futurists, the Dadaists and the Surrealists. In Chapter One I shall make a quick survey of the development of anti-theatre at the hands of these dramatists and movements, and include a brief study of Ionesco and Handke, whose theatrical experiments have some influence on Pinter's drama. Because of its importance, Beckett's drama will be studied separately in Chapter Two.

A study of all these experiments in this thesis will reveal their complete deviation from the mode of expression of the realistic drama in Britain. Such a study enables us to understand the different motives that stand behind Pinter's creativity.

After the cultural dilemma that had shocked the Western world as a result of the doubts cast on Christianity, a new type of iconoclastic literature began to appear as a reaction against all forms of previous art. Rejecting the Naturalist-Realist movement that had flourished at the end of the last century, a number of French writers began to create caricature-like images of man, society and the universe in order to satirize the realistic image of life.

At the depth of the human nature, they say, man is quite different from what he seems to be. He is bloodthirsty, greedy and selfish. The world, to them, is not governed by a loving and caring God but by whimsical forces. These dramatists began to depict man in the way they see him, outside the world he lives in. Moreover, they did not aim at creating an illusion of reality, but at creating theatricality and bizarre images. In the works of Maeterlinck and Jarry, for example, the elements of traditional drama began to take perverse forms: the hero became anti-hero, plot lost its logic, setting became symbolic and language started to become non-referential. After the First World War this aversion to traditional art became stronger and a number of movements adopted anti-art and anti-literature theories. When the Second World War made the doubts about man's ability to live in peace stronger, the anti-art movements finally began to give their ripe fruit to the world of the theatre. The plays of Ionesco, Beckett, Genet, Handke and others put the different theories about anti-art into practice. In the plays of Beckett, in particular, especially Waiting for Godot, anti-art has been epitomised and theatre is created in the artistic spirit of an anti-theatre.

To understand the way in which the anti-theatre negates the limits of realism, one has to look at the basis of the realistic works and the core of their logic. Up to the end of the nineteenth century, the general view of the world was that it is a total world.[12] In the realistic works there is an assumption that there is no separation between the individual and the social or public aspects of life. This view of totality and wholeness began to break down at the beginning of the twentieth century and literature began to take new extremes, though the traditional view has persisted, despite deep feelings of uncertainty. On one side realism took a social line which ended up in a type of ideological writing. At the other extreme, there appeared the self-centred literature of the isolated individual. It is the literature which studies man from the inside trying to find explanations for his being. To this second line of writing, the works of Mallarme, Maeterlinck, Jarry and the anti-art movements and the new anti-theatre experiments belong. To such a group of dramatists the image of a total world is false. Man can only know what is inside him and what he perceives. In later development of this individual type of writing, especially in the works of Ionesco and Beckett, this individuality becomes also false, as the self breaks into selves which cannot be reconciled. The real

self and the real society of literary realism become mere illusions. In his book Modern Tragedy, Raymond Williams depicts this extreme vision with precision:

> The illusion is not a means to reality, but an expression of illusion itself. Then the work itself protests, the artist protests, against those conditions of its expression by which it threatens to become real. Traditional procedures can be rejected on this ground alone. The credibility of illusion is itself menacing. Art must not aspire, even in its own mode, to any false reality which might disturb or shatter the experience of total illusion. The ordinary tension of expression is seen as damnable. Art must be anti-art, the novel must be anti-novel, the theatre must be anti-theatre, for this compelling reason. The most dangerous thing about any utterance, in this movement, is that it creates the possibility of communication, which is already known to be an illusion. The total condition of life, when seen in this way, leaves no theoretical basis for art, except its existence, which yet, ironically, has at some points to be willed. Then the very will to art has itself to be converted to bad faith. The creative process has to be separated from will, and, at its extreme, from design. A condition of total illusion is thus precariously achieved by a method which must continually turn back on itself and dissolve what it has created. For without this continuous dissolution, the experience itself will be made unreal, by becoming falsely real. [13]

In Pinter's first three plays, The Room(1957), The Birthday Party (1958) and The Dumb Waiter(1960), states of uncertainty, hate and horror of physical violence, seem to belong to this world of illusion. They evoke the illusion and violence of Ionesco's plays. Yet Pinter controls these

elements in his subsequent plays by going back to more realistic situations. Even in the first three plays Pinter is only an intruder in the world of anti-theatre. To Williams:

> The more general pattern of unreality, failure to communicate, and meaninglessness is indeed now so widespread that it is virtually, in itself, a dramatic convention. For many writers, including at times Pinter, it is no more than convention: a particular kind of theatrical opportunity. The convention of total illusion, and of man's inablity to communicate, seems then merely the most bourgeois of platitudes.

Williams then adds: "But when this is so, we are in danger of missing those few works which go beyond the formulas and create the experience in depth."[14] Beckett's art has deep philosophical bases but Pinter's art is, more or less, a general observation about human behaviour. Pinter is not a philosopher-playwright but rather an actor-playwright who is deeply rooted in the tradition which he has learned from his acting experience. To enrich his experience, he has introduced some of the elements of anti-theatre into the British tradition. He succeeds at times and fails at others. It is a major task of this thesis to analyze both the merits and the shortcomings of Pinter's art.

- IV -

The development of drama on the British stage during the twentieth century has been characteristically different from that on the Continent. Realism, especially after the examples of Ibsen and Chekhov, was and is still a major mode of expression on the British stage. Before the 1950s the popular drama was dominated by playwrights like Noel Coward and Terence Rattigan, who applied a very general sense of realism without committing themselves to any new ideas, contrary to the more socially orientated drama of George Bernard Shaw. Leaning more towards Chekhov than Ibsen, Coward and Rattigan continued the tradition of recording the shifts of moral values as society changes. Their drama is characterized by character study and by well-made plots. The characters are often created from examples from real life and the whole structure and the language of the plays are made to convey, in economical and impressive ways, the funny or the sad experience of those life-like characters. Harold Pinter, who started his career as an actor in a number of repertory theatres, before he turned to playwrighting, was certainly familiar with the works of Coward and Rattigan. Although he started by writing three plays that depend mainly on conventions other than those of

Coward and Rattigan, his indebtedness to their drama began to grow gradually, especially as he shifted to a more realistic style. It is clear now that even the very first plays do have strong artistic connections with the traditional moulds of British realistic drama. The study of the continuity of tradition in the plays of Harold Pinter is both amusing and illuminating. Amusing because they make us more aware of changes made to the emotional attitudes of the characters of plays of the first half of the century, like Coward's Design for Living(1933) and Rattigan's The Browning Version(1948), for example, in Pinter's family plays of the second half of the century, such as The Homecoming(1965) and Betrayal(1978); illuminating because they give us an idea about the artistic changes to the theatrical mood, especially to the realistic treatment of the theme of family life and sexual relationships.

- V -

Looking at the surface of Pinter's drama, it seems to deal with the essential problems of existence in a metaphysical way: mysterious forces interfere in the life of the individual(The Birthday Party), individuals search for their identity in vain (The Caretaker, 1960), others

discover that life is static and inexplicable (No Man's Land, 1975, and A Kind of Alaska, 1982). These themes are in tune with the general mood of thinking in our time. The dissolving certainties that Pinter's plays expose are the province of the modern. In drama these themes are mainly connected with anti-theatre movements, but, in fact, they can be traced in almost every existing dramatic trend from the deeply traditional to the savagely experimental. It is, however, not the theme that distinguishes Pinter's art, but rather, the manner in which these themes are imparted. When one investigates more deeply the way in which he tackles these subjects, one discovers that Pinter's affiliation with anti-theatre is less than one expects. He is not an absurdist who depicts a chaotic universe. In fact he does not tackle major metaphysical questions in his plays(and when he does so, he usually fails, as will be shown in Part Two, to communicate these problems in a universal sense). In his emphasis on the problems of man within a familiar environment, he is in accord with the general mood of thinking in Britain, and is not so very much an outsider as he seems to be. In contemporary English drama physical existence takes priority over the metaphysical and Pinter's art has this priority. It is true that Pinter is one of the exceptional playwrights who do not indulge themselves in

clear social issues, but his art, on the whole, does not show that the problem lies outside man. There is a problem of reality, but this problem concerns man himself, his cruelty, his weaknesses, his evasive nature, his sensual preoccupations, his cheating of himself and of others. Pinter only appears to be dealing with an unknown world because he leaves his problems unsolved and because he does not involve himself in a search for alternatives for the problems he creates. In his early plays there is casual violence without a verification of the motives, or an identification of the characters, but the cause behind the violence is a human one. It is the "organisation" that has sent Goldberg and McCann to fetch Stanley in The Birthday Party. The mystification does not allow for a deeper symbolic meaning of Goldberg's organisation. Moreover, there are hints, as we shall see when we study the play, that the violence incurred on Stanley is retributive and not totally inexplicable. The question of identity in plays like The Caretaker, The Dwarfs (1960) and Family Voices (1981) is related to society and people, though in a faint way. Davies's claim that his identity can be found in "Sidcup" does not evoke a metaphysical vision similar to Beckett's Godot, especially within the context of Davies's unreliablity. Again, the vision of stasis in No Man's land

is lost behind mystification which becomes an end and not a means in this play. Only in his recent play A Kind of Alaska is the vision of stasis crystal clear, but here the play is characteristically realistic. This play shows that realism can communicate fundamental images of life without the need to resort to the bizarre and the unusual elements of theatricality. It is perhaps Pinter's concern about the immediate problems of his characters that makes his plays lack the totality of vision of Beckett's drama. On the other hand, his concern to show the dissolving certainties of the age within a certain down to earth realism has also made the realistic in his plays incomplete and lacking.

Pinter's drama is about the reality or falsehood of man rather than the reality or falsehood of the universe. This fact directly connects Pinter's art to the British traditional theatre, which, as we shall see in the works of Coward and Rattigan, is a theatre of character. Yet here, in the study of character, Pinter distinguishes himself by introducing some elements of anti-theatre. To Pinter reality is not as "firm" as we think it to be, it is rather like "quicksand". It is "sucked" out by time and retrieving it is difficult because of human limitations. For this reason, verification of the motives of the characters is not

necessary.

> We do not carry labels on our chests[...] The desire for verification on the part of all of us, with regard to our own experience and the experience of others, is understandable but cannot always be satisfied. I suggest there can be no hard distinctions between [...] what is true and what is false [...] A character on the stage who can represent no convincing argument or information as to his past experience, his present behaviour or his aspirations, nor give a comprehensive analysis of his motives is as legitimate and as worthy of attention as one who, alarmingly, can do all these things. The more acute the experience the less articulate its expression.(I, 11)

Moreover, one cannot know the identity of man fully because people are not ready to reveal themselves.

> I think that we communicate only too well, in our silence, in what is unsaid, and that what takes place is a continual evasion, desperate rear-guard attempts to keep ourselves to ourselves. Communication is too alarming. To enter into someone else's life is too frightening. To disclose to others the poverty within us is too fearsome a possibility.(I, 15)

To serve reality in Pinter's point of view, is to admit the existing dangers of communication. The characters created would not compete in a moral way, but rather in their ability to hide their secrets and at the same time to discover the secrets of the others. In such an artistic deadlock the dramatist has the freedom to create his

characters in the way he wishes. He does not need to verify the action of his characters. In such an ambience of mystery, the road for fantasy is open for the dramatist. Theoretically, Pinter has arrived at a conclusion similar to that of Ionesco about the fantastic elements in real life, but, as I have said before, to Pinter it is not the life in a universal sense, but the life of the character.

> Life is much more mysterious than the plays make it out to be. And it is this mystery which fascinates me: what happens between words, what happens when no words are spoken.[15]

To Ionesco the reality of life is much more profound than the realism of existing drama:

> I have always thought that the truth of fiction is more profound, more charged with meaning than every day reality. Realism, whether it be socialist or not, falls short of reality. It shrinks it, attenuates it, falsifies it; it does not take into account our basic truth and our fundamental obsessions: love, death, astonishment. It presents man in a reduced and estranged perspective. Truth is in our dream, in the imagination.[16]

Of course the two dramatists are right about the mysterious elements in life, but the important thing is the way in which the mystery is dramatized. For Ionesco, it is dramatized by creating a world of dream and by evoking the

imagination. In most of Pinter's drama this is not the style used. It is in the world of every day reality that this fantasy is inserted. Here lies the strength of the playwright, and here also the danger of confusion in his art. Pinter is, no doubt, the playwright of mystification. But how much mystification can the playwright, legitimately, include in his art? I shall try to find an answer to this question in the study of particular plays depending mainly on the critical reactions to the way he formulates ambiguity and mystification. I shall also use an analogical procedure and compare his style of mystification with that of Beckett. The following observations can be made about the mystification in his plays. In some plays the mystification becomes self-expressive, especially when the structure of the play is theatrical and does not pretend to create an illusion of reality. This is seen in his poetic plays such as Landscape, Silence and Family Voices. On other occasions the mystification is subdued by the overwhelming realism, as in The Caretaker, Betrayal and A Kind of Alaska. In the early plays, however, the symbolic elements seem personal and make some of the plays very perverse in their composition, as The Homecoming, for example. Finally, in few plays, such as The Dwarfs and No Man's Land, the mystification becomes rather an end in itself than a part of

wider reality, and confusion prevails.

On the other hand, how much of reality is the author supposed to include in his art? Pinter uses a language that has been termed by Bamber Gascoigne as "distilled realism", in which ordinary explanation has been omitted and the strong sub-text has to be grasped or felt through fragmentary lines.[17] At times a "microscopic reality" is employed and minute details are presented. This distilled realism is a very effective approach when it is rich enough to create a discourse: an expressive situation which does not require further clarification. Such an approach creates art without preaching-like dialogues. Pinter often succeeds in creating such situations, especially in his poetic plays.

Yet Pinter's realism has its own limitations. These limitations appear when his art is compared with that of Ibsen and Beckett, the two great dramatists who represent the two aspects of his theatre. In an interesting article, "The Limits of Realism", [18] Richard Pearce compares Ibsen's A Doll's House with Beckett's Waiting for Godot in order to show why the second play is not in the tradition of literary realism. After showing that the closed system and the single artistic economy of A Doll's House have been replaced by suspension in Waiting for Godot, he finds that

there are at least four conditions to the limits of a realistic work. First, everything is observable; second, literary realism is based upon the facts that things, people, ideas, feelings are quantifiable and measurable; third, literary realism follows the rules of cause and effect; and finally, the subject of the realistic work is capable of imitation. These four conditions, he finds, are violated by Beckett in Waiting for Godot. Suspension goes beyond the limits of realism, or as one might add, Beckett has cast doubts upon the validity of these conditions. As for Pinter, he applies the rules of literary realism but only to a certain limit. Pinter, for example, observes elements of the real world. He sets his plays within the boundaries of time and place. The characters live in a known society and have general character-traits. They speak a language familiar to the audience. Yet observation stops at this limit: the characters then become more than what they say and the language becomes partially non-referential. In this limited observation about the characters and their language, Pinter's characters miss the complications of Ibsen's characters and, at the same time, because of their realistic aspects, they also miss the imagery of Beckett's symbolic anti-heroes. The characters in Pinter's plays become one-dimensional with one major "label" written on

their "chests": liars. The masks Pinter's characters wear do not reflect the social prison of the individual of Ibsen's plays, nor the intellectual awareness of Beckett's anti-heroes.[19] They wear self-imposed masks which put them in prisons that are quite below the standards of both Ibsen's realism and Beckett's abstractionism. Again, the masks of Pinter's characters are not like those of Pirandello's, whose work forms a bridge between Ibsen and Beckett. While in Pirandello one can easily distinguish between illusion and reality because his characters do sometimes take off their masks and reveal their true identity, the secret of the identity of the Pinterian character remains with the author himself.

It is perhaps the presence of a comprehensive and a balanced view of man, society and, if possible, the universe, that elevates art to greatness. The totality in vision makes Ibsen's A Doll's House and Beckett's Waiting for Godot classics of the age. Very few plays, even those written by great dramatists can claim such a very comprehensive and balanced attitude. In my own view, Pinter's A Kind of Alaska is one of these plays. It tackles both mystery and reality with clarity and precision and both the weakness and the strength of man is evident.

It is also in this context of a comprehensive and a balanced attitude that I find many of Pinter's plays limited in scope and sometimes only peripheral. In his drama there is an emphas on a bad faith in man. The evil aspect in man is undoubtedly exists but there is evidence from real life that it is not the only face of humanity. The emphasis on evil in contemporary art has gone too far, especially as a reaction to the brutality of the two World Wars. The dominant image of a transcendental evil in man has become another convention. Those who support this view give the example of what happened in the concentration camps as an example of man's real evil nature. But as Williams has rightly observed: "while men created the camps, other men died at conscious risk to destroy them".[20]

Man is weak and strong, cruel and kind, impulsive and in control of himself, sensual and mental, honest and dishonest, and unless this duality is reflected in art it will be partial, unbalanced and not comprehensive. In some of Pinter's plays there are foils to the black aspects of man, but they are very faint. The dominant image of man is more of an animal than of a human, though, as we shall see, in some of his later plays he has shown more interest in human compassion.

- VI -

Until the middle years of the 1950s, which saw (in 1955) the first British performance of Waiting for Godot and (in 1956) the premiere of Look Back in Anger and the first visit of the Berliner Ensemble to London, the names of Terence Rattigan and Noel Coward, heirs of the theatre of middle class action and middle class audience, were in the forefront of the consciousness of the theatre-going public. After the Second World War, Rattigan was the most popular playwright in Britain. As an established playwright of the time, he began to defend his type of writing against the intruding new plays. But there was a very strong incoming wave which could not be resisted.

With the performance of Beckett's and Brecht's plays on British stages, the British theatre began to reach out in new directions. Rattigan, "the urbane celebrity and great commercial success",[21] fell into critical disfavour and was not able to restore his reputation until shortly before his death in 1977. Meanwhile the traditional British theatre continued its role and the names of Alan Ayckbourn and Simon Gray are shining now as a proof of the continued vigour and popularity of this type of theatre. However, in the 1960s and the 1970s the limelight was mainly directed at

two types of writers: the young socialist playwrights, many of whom took Bertolt Brecht as their example and aimed at creating a working-class theatre; and a much smaller group which did not commit itself to any political programme and roughly followed Beckett's depiction of a cultural dilemma. Early Stoppard and Pinter are in many ways representatives of this second type of writer.

Nevertheless, most contemporary British playwrights tried to exploit the imported current of art without a total break with the demands of the British stage. Thus, their theatre remained verbal and, with few exceptions, realistic. Though Harold Pinter's work is one of the exceptions, his depiction of the dark aspects of contemporary man is in line with the general mood prevailing on the British theatre.

It is not difficult to notice a certain level of agreement among contemporary British playwrights on the sick nature of the individual. The socialist playwrights attribute this to the social structure, while others give it a more general interpretation. Generally speaking, therefore, the heroic figure, the pivotal central character who, relying upon his high moral strength, changes the minds and hearts of others while remaining faithful to his principles, becomes increasingly hard to find. The image of

a hero like Bluntschli in Shaw's Arms and the Man(1894) has stepped out to be replaced by an anti-hero figure like Jimmy Porter in Osborne's Look Back in Anger. Again the general tendency in the new theatre is to move from the luxurious bedroom of the type of Raina Petkoff -- Bluntschli's lover -- to what can be considered as beds in a mental hospital. This change is noticed by C.W.E Bigsby in his introduction to Contemporary English Drama:

> For a period in which boundaries are indeed dissolving, in which roles are no longer as clearly definable and acceptable, in which the dominant images seem to be those of decay and degeneration, and in which society is perceived as a conspiracy against the self or against a class, it is perhaps not surprising that the mental hospital should have become a favourite image and setting for the playwright of the 60s and 70s. It is evident, for example, in Durrenmatt's The Scientists, Peter Weiss's Marat/Sade, Ken Kesey's One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, Edward Albee's Listening, David Storey's Home, Joe Orton's What the Butler Saw, Peter Shaffer's Equus, David Edgar's Mary Barnes, Tom Stoppard's Every Good Boy Deserves Favour and Mary O'Malley's Look Out... Here Comes Trouble. It is a telling image and, indeed, its potency underlines a thematic continuity which can be seen as connecting the early plays of Osborne, Wesker and Stoppard with the work of writers like David Hare, David Edgar, Howard Brenton and Barrie Keefe two decades later. Beyond everything they express a powerful sense of cultural and personal collapse.[22]

It is clear from this list that the depiction of man's uncertainties is not the monopoly of what is known as the Theatre of the Absurd. We can find traces of the split personality not only in the works of some socialist playwrights, but in some of the works of the traditional writers as well. However, the mood in which these different playwrights portray the disintegrated character is different. The mood of writing is crucial to the committed artist.

Socialist playwrights see the distorted personality as an indication of lack of social awareness on the part of the individual and, more often, carelessness and injustice on the part of the society. The lack of social awareness can be exemplified in Bond's Saved,[23] in which every individual is responsible in one way or another for the stoning of the baby. Even Len watches the murder without doing anything. Again, the corruption of the individual is clear in Brenton's Christie in Love,[24] in which both the persecutor and the persecuted are sexually corrupt.

Yet, in spite of this often dark depiction of human weakness, the committed playwright cannot but be explicit because ambiguity is a denial of the human being's ability to communicate and cooperate. That is why the language of

the committed playwright and the content of his plays still mainly depend on realism. Brecht has defined realism as:

> revealing the mask of causes in society/unmasking the dominant viewpoints as viewpoints of those who dominate/ writing from the point of view of the class which, for the most urgent difficulties, holds the broadest solutions/emphasizing the moment of the development/ concrete character and possibility of abstraction.[25]

Like the committed playwrights, but without their vision, the traditionalists who write only to communicate their personal experience or a personal vision in order to entertain their audiences, do sometimes touch upon dark aspects of life and the weakness of man, especially after the present loss of transcending values. Such writers do not have radical solutions to man's predicament and they generally take things at ease because they still hope man can improve his situation, or at least face his crises bravely. In Rattigan's The Browning Version, for example, betrayal and dishonesty build up to add to the central character's misery and incompetence, but he resists at the end and shows some determination that makes the audience admire him immediately after deploring his situation. However, in the case of such writing, optimism is often plausible only because it often remains at the individual level and rarely tries to tackle revolutionary affairs.

Unlike the above mentioned positive or at least hopeful appraisals of the possibility of human improvement and change, Beckett's (and often Pinter's) world does not give chance or hope of a plausible solution. In fact the treatment of every day problems is not in any way thought of by Beckett. To him, as we shall see in some detail in Chapter Two, man's problem is a metaphysical one. There is no difference between man's birth, life, and death because his condition is static. To Beckett, man's life is full of contradictions and opposite motives, none of which is convincing and decisive. Christianity and Western philosophy do not convince Beckett and he finds himself in darkness. To varying degrees Beckett influenced many British playwrights, including a number of socialist writers such as Caryl Churchill, Barrie Keefe, David Hare and Stephen Poliakov.[26]

Yet it seems difficult for socialist playwrights to accept Beckett's art. Edward Bond could not tolerate "an actor to act in Beckett one night and in Brenton the next -- it is also nonsense to expect the audience to enjoy one and then the other. If they did, we have to say that they did not understand either." He argues that, to him, "you cannot any longer create art without socialism", and that the

English Stage Company at the Royal Court should have adopted a philosophy. "To do Beckett one week and Brenton the next", he adds,"would be just absurd and culturally pernicious.It would encourage an Edwardian attitude to the playing-fields and battle fields of art, as if it were to be chosen as a new shirt is chosen, on ground of taste, comfort and variety -- as if changing your life or creating justice were as easy".[27] Bond is right, I think, in rejecting the negative art of Beckett but that same negative look is considered by many who enjoy Beckett as a contribution to our knowledge of the human crisis. Moreover, no one can deny that there is a cultural problem that involves every human aspect and not only the social one. For a committed playwright, however, it is not enough to point to a situation that tells of an imminent catastrophe, but you have also to search for an alternative to avoid it. Beckett, of course, builds his philosophy upon the lack of such alternative. Nevertheless, Bond himself shares a part of Beckett's eschatological imagery when he says: "Human history has reached a critical and probably decisive point. If we survive the next 150 years we will survive the next 10,000".[28]

Likewise, Bond's criticism of Beckett's uncommitted theatre can be applied to Harold Pinter, though after about thirty years of indifference to existing problems in his writing, Pinter has suddenly changed his attitude, and one has to wait for future writing to evaluate the extent and quality of this change.

During the course of his past career Pinter considered non-commitment almost sacred. He argued that "living in the world must be tied up with living in your own, where you are --- in your room ... Before you manage to adjust yourself to living alone in your room ... you are not terribly fit and equipped to go out and fight the battles ... which are fought mostly in abstractions in the outside world".[29] This question of the knowledge of the self, the doubt about its reality, is one of the aspects of anti-theatre. In both committed and traditional theatre, this doubt cannot be accepted, or if accepted it would be limited. There should be some kind of human understanding that could lead to better conditions if this understanding is well exploited. Moreover, mutual understanding implies some moral adaptation, whether individual or social. Such moral aim is refused by Pinter, who says,"as far as I am concerned there is no real difference between my sketches and my plays. In

both I am interested primarily in people: I want to present living people to the audience, worthy of their interest primarily because they are, they exist, not because of any moral the author may draw from them".[30] Pinter encourages the intuitive creation which is encouraged by almost all anti-artists. The piece of art in itself becomes everything. "What I write", he says in a speech, "has no obligation to anything other than to itself. My responsibility is not to audience, critics, producers, directors, actors or to my fellow men in general,but to the play in hand, simply."(I, 10)

But, when compared to Beckett, Pinter's plays display some levels of psychological and social study that cannot be found in Beckett's plays. In his family plays, for example, there is a certain level of psychological study of the behaviour of the characters, though it is often incomplete. There is also a study, in general terms, of the behaviour and language of certain classes of people. In The Caretaker, in particular, Davies is a clear example of the lower working class, which is the subject matter of much of the socialist drama. In this same play there is also a hint at national and racial fears of violence. Yet these psychological and social elements have a secondary or minor

importance in his drama. This is, as I have said before, one of the results of the reduction in the realistic approach. Even when Pinter tackles a realistic problem of a middle class level, such as the problem of profitmaking in Betrayal, the reductions in the emotional and intellectual problems make the problems less effective. Generally speaking, Pinter's plays remain within the area of the study of man from the inside. To him, as we have just seen, man cannot go out to the world before he knows himself and adjusts himself in his "room".

In a recent interview on a BBC 2 Newsnight programme on 16 December 1983, Pinter seems to have decided to shift the battle to the outside. He is reported to have regretted his previous lack of interest in the existing problems of the world. He argued that one must not sit idle while looking at the end of the world, or the blackout, not only of history, but of the earth itself as well. As a sign of new commitment, he has contributed a sketch to an evening arranged by the CND Movement in response to the effect of the American film The Day After, which shows the expected results of a nuclear disaster. His sketch entitled Precisely (1983), exposes politicians as tradesmen who make war and kill millions in the same way as they make a

commercial deal.

Pinter's latest work *One for the Road*(1984), carries within it some signs of a new thematic approach. The play treats the subject of the torture of people for political reasons and could be the beginning of a new stage in Pinter's career which might lead him to adopt a clearer stance of political and social issues. That will be for the future to tell.

Notes

1. Guido Almansi and Simon Henderson, Harold Pinter (London & New York: Methuen, 1983), p. 15.

2. Theatre and Anti-theatre: New Movements Since Beckett (London: Secker & Warburg, 1979), p. xi.

3. Dada and After: Extremist Modernism and English Literature(New Jersey:Humanities Press & Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), p. 65.

4. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books in association with Eyre & Spottiswoode),p. 10.

5. In Philip Drew, The Meaning of Freedom(Aberdeen, Aberdeen University Press, 1982), pp. 401-402, the author considers the theatre of Cruelty(Adamov, Artaud, Albee) and that of Inertia(Jarry, Ionesco) branches of the theatre of Bewilderment. In Eric Sellin, The Dramatic Concepts of Antonin Artaud (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 54-56, the author uses the term "theatre of the Grotesque" and points to Lionel Abel's term metatheatre. He also uses the terms "Solar" and"Lunar" drama to describe the two types of drama that interested Artaud. Sellin defines the first as "that which is

characterized by action, the Male, revolt and self-assertion," and the second as "that which is characterized by stasis, the Female, acquiescence, and self-abnegation"(p. 10). Sellin argues that the drama of such writers as Buchner, Jarry, Strindberg, Maeterlinck, Vitrac, Ionesco and Beckett have a mixture of both the Lunar and the Solar but the Lunar is predominant. He considers this type of drama as the result of the "vacancy left by God's dethronment"(p. 54).

6. The Theatre of the Absurd (revised and enlarged edition, 1968), p. 26.

7. Peter Handke, Offending the Audience and Self-Accusation, trans. by Michael Roloff, (London: Methuen, 1971). Offending the Audience (1966) was first staged in Britain by The Other Company in 1970.

8. Theatre and Anti-theatre: New Movements Since Beckett, p. 81.

9. In his Open Theatre Chaikin asked writers to participate collectively in the creation of The Serpent (1967), Terminal (1969) and The Mutation Show (1971), but "the importance of the writer seemed to decrease with each production" as Theodore Shank has observed in his book:

American Alternative Theatre(London & Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1982), p.42.

10. Brook has moved the audience from one place to another in the Persepolis production of Orgharst(1971); see Theatre and Anti-theatre, p. 216. Julian Beck and Judith Malina, founders of the Living Theatre, made the audience move to six different places in the Pittsburgh production of Six Public Acts to Transmute Violence into Concord(May 1975). See Theodore Shank, p. 29.

11. Modern Drama in Theory and Practice, Vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981),p. 134.

12. See Raymond Williams, Modern Tragedy(London: Chatto and Windus, 1966), pp. 139-155. The breakdown of the idea of a total world is discussed in some detail.

13. Ibid. pp.141-2.

14. Ibid. p. 153.

15. Harold Pinter speaking about the script for the film Accident in Sight and Sound, Autumn 1966. Cited in J. L. Styan, Modern Drama in Theory and Practice, vol. II, p. 134.

16. Eugene Ionesco, Notes and Counter-Notes. Cited in Richard N. Coe, Ionesco: A Study of his Plays(London: Methuen, 1971), p. 28.

17. See John Elsom, Post-War British Theatre(London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 109.

18. Richard Pearce, "The Limits of Realism", College English, Vol. XXXI, no. 4, January 1970, pp. 335-343.

19. The comparison between the masks in Ibsen and Beckett is taken from Pearce's article, p. 340.

20. Modern Tragedy, p. 59.

21. Benedict Nightingale,An Introduction to Fifty Modern British Plays(London & Sydney: Pan Books, 1982), p. 249.

22. Contemporary English Drama "Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies, 19"(London: Edward Arnold, 1981), p. 19.

23. Edward Bond, Saved(London: Methuen, 1966). Saved was first presented by the English Stage Company, at the Royal Court, London, on 3 November 1965.

24. Howard Brenton, Plays for the Poor Theatre(London: Eyre Methuen, 1980). Christie in Love was first performed by the Portable Theatre at Oval House, London, on 23 November 1969.

25.Jacque Ehrmann(ed.), Literature and Revolution (Boston, 1967),p. 160. Cited in Contemporary English Drama, p. 36.

26. Contemporary English Drama, p. 22.

27. Edward Bond, "The theatre I want", At the Royal Court, ed. by Richard Findlater(Derbyshire: Amber lane Press, 1981), pp. 121-124.

28. ibid. p. 121.

29. Pinter, interviewed by Kenneth Tynan in the series "People Today", B.B.C. Home Service, 28 October1960; pre-recorded 19 August 1960. Cited in Martin Esslin,Pinter: A Study of His Plays, third edition(London: Eyre Methuen, 1977), p.34.

30. Cited in John R. Taylor, Anger and After(London: Methuen, 1962), p. 335.

PART ONE

THEATRE AND ANTI-THEATRE

CHAPTER ONE

ANTI-THEATRE: AN HISTORICAL SURVEY

Being only a convention, anti-theatre includes a variety of forms and of manners of expression that are difficult to put under an exact definition. However, the tendency of those who follow this tradition to negate existing theatrical expressions and their commitment to search for ultimate forms of artistic freedom, constitute the unifying criteria of this modern convention or tradition. "I call certain of my plays anti-plays", says Eugene Ionesco, "anti-comedies, pseudo-drama, but I create anti-theatre only to the extent that the theatre that one usually witnesses is taken for real theatre".[1] The exponents of this tradition reject the use of the theatre to create the illusion of reality and call for a theatre of "pure play", that is without any attempt at creating life-like characters or any attempt to imitate realistic action. To achieve this "pure play" or pure theatricality, the elements of traditional theatre often become the target

of satire and sarcasm. For this reason Ronald Hayman considers anti-theatre a tradition which uses "the medium against the medium, not in order to destroy it but to reform it by exposing what is bad about the way it has been used".[2] For him to use the term anti-theatre is "to emphasize the negative, destructive, revolutionary, reductionist and abstractionist tendencies in the new theatrical art. The anti-play is less mimetic than satirical, not so much a story about life in a particular place at a particular time as an object in its own right, non-referential, implicitly denying the feasibility of referential art".[3] The tendency to negate traditional modes of expression has gradually intensified during this century until it reached a climax after the Second World War. In this gradual development, the new experiments depend on those which precede them in order to find better means or tools for negation. In other words, the anti-theatre is a continually progressing tradition in which every new experiment tries to reduce more of the conventional elements of the theatre. The young anti-artist not only parodies realistic drama but also extends his travesty to the preceding anti-theatre itself. This is very clear in the case of the Austrian playwright Peter Handke. Handke's anti-plays would not have been created without the

anti-plays of Samuel Beckett, yet, by comparison, some of Handke's plays overshadow in their reductionism even Beckett's plays themselves, especially in Offending the Audience. Nicholas Hern has noticed this reciprocal relationship. When categorizing a play like Handke's Offending the Audience or Ionesco's The Bald Prima Donna as anti-plays, "It is important", Hern says, "to be clear in these cases(as also with Ubu Roi, the daddy of modern anti-plays) [that] the 'anti' is only relative to what has gone before: none of these anti-plays represented an act of total destruction, because each of them could only exist and could only make sense within the structure of existing theatre against which it was rebelling".[4]

Behind the rejection of this tradition of the creation of realistic images is the dissatisfaction with modern thought and culture. At the basis of this rebellious spirit is a disbelief in the sources of inspiration. At the beginning the resentment was directed at Christianity and the social structures related to its culture, but this resentment later included secular thought and its structures as well. A common theme of this tradition is the isolated man who has no hope of salvation and no hope of a better future. "Cut from his religious, metaphysical and

transcendental roots", Ionesco declares, " man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd and useless".[5]

Dissatisfied with the prevailing culture and current artistic expressions, the anti-artist becomes angry at the people's acceptance of what he considers to be mere illusions. For this reason, the tendency to negate the content and the form of the media is yoked with a feeling of hostility towards the audience. Susan Sontag wrote:

> Art becomes the enemy of the artist, for it denies him the realization -- the transcendence -- he desires. Therefore, art comes to be considered something to be overthrown. A new element enters the individual artwork and becomes constitutive of it: the appeal (tacit or overt) for its own abolition -- and, ultimately, for the abolition of the art itself ... Committed to the idea that the power of art is located in its power to negate, the ultimate weapon in the artist's inconsistent war with the audience is to verge closer and closer to silence.[6]

- I -

The story of anti-theatre is a story of mystery, fantasy, Grand Guignol and provocation. With Stephan Mallarme(1842-1898), Maurice Maeterlinck(1862-1949) and Alfred Jarry(1873-1907), the three symbolists who carried

the tools of demolition to rebuild drama on their revolutionary basis, the first practical examples of the anti-theatre tradition come into existence.

Mallarme's connection with the theatre is mainly as a critic: his views of poetry and drama paved the way for the spread of anti-realistic writing in France. Using the ideas of Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) and Charles-Pierre Baudelaire(1821-1867), Mallarme advocates a drama that depends on dreams and evokes the spirit of things. He believes that poetry should be the dominant constituent, if other arts were to be employed in drama. The poetry he wants is that which implies and suggests rather than states and explains. His ideas of a poetic drama, in addition to his call "for a 'detheatricalized' and for a 'dematerialized' stage",[7] anticipated the work of Beckett. Again, the idea of a one-actor play which Mallarme proposes has been fulfilled by Beckett and Pinter, although Mallarme suggests the poet himself should be the actor who would act to an audience of not more than twenty-four persons.[8]

Like Mallarme, Maeterlinck sought to find truth in the mysterious and the invisible qualities of life, but unlike him, he found a dramatic way to express it. He envisaged a destructive evil force in the world like that seen by Poe

and Baudelaire. Thus Maeterlinck's world contradicts what the preceding dramatists depicted as a logical universe ruled by a just God. Before him, dramatists would show disorder and contradiction only as an anticipation of the coming of a solution from an unexpected source, the deus ex machina. In Maeterlinck's Pelleas and Melisande (1893)", the characters are led to the slaughter house like sheep [...] for reasons that are never clear, either to them or to the audience. There is sequence but no causality (that is, one event follows another but is not caused by it)".[9]

In Pelleas and Melisande, Maeterlinck's best play, there is some action, though mainly symbolic, but his achievement, both in theory and practice, which will later influence many writers, among them Beckett and Pinter, is his innovation of the static theatre in which there is no movement and the tension is kept internal and psychological.

> I have grown to believe that an old man, seated in his armchair, waiting patiently, with his lamp beside him, giving unconscious ear to all the eternal laws that reign about his house ... does yet live in reality a deeper, more human and more universal life than the lover who strangles his mistress, the captain who conquers in battle, or 'the husband who avenges his honour'.[10]

In his one-act play The Intruder (1890), an old man sits

quietly thinking that other people, unaware of death is visiting his daughter. In another one-act play The Blinds (also 1890), six blind old men and six blind old women sit facing each other. With them there is only one boy who can see but cannot speak. They are waiting, not for Godot as in Beckett's 1953 play, but for a godly priest who turns out to be with them, yet he is dead. The dialogue and tone of Beckett's play "may be more witty", says J.L. Styan, "but the point may not be too different".[11]

Alfred Jarry's influence on contemporary theatre is a clear example of the openness and readiness of contemporary art to accept the most idiosyncratic and anti-cultural creations. For Alfred Jarry seems to say "no" to every ideal in his surroundings: religion, social values, art and its logic. Maurice Marc LaBelle begins his detailed study of Alfred Jarry's life, work and theory of literature with words which support some of the above notions:

> "Hornpot! We won't have destroyed a thing unless we demolish even the ruins!"(Alfred Jarry, Oeuvres Completes, Michel Arrive,Paris Gallimard [Bibliotheque de la pleiade], 1972, p.427.) Such was the credo of Alfred Jarry. Consequently, he assaulted the most sacred altars and groves of society, government, and religion with a rarely equalled zest and zeal. His troops, superbly captained by King Ubu and Dr Faustroll, forced the enemy to yield precious ground, and as a result he did much to revolutionize modern literature.[12]

Jarry opposed Christianity, considering it contradictory, and depicted Christ as the "lion of Hate".[13] He believed in a malevolent cosmos in which "man is alone, man is weak",[14] a theme that became major in contemporary drama. Moreover, Jarry was at odds with the bourgeois social standards and their dicta of behaviour.

On the literary level, Jarry was the first to say "no" to Aristotle. His anti-Aristotelian stance has led to the introduction of the tragicomedy type of drama. It has also led to the creation of the circular plot, that is, without clear distinction between the traditional three divisions of a plot: beginning, middle, and ending. Moreover, Jarry rejected Aristotle's opposition to the "commonplace and low"[15] language and by beginning his King Ubu with the word "shit" he has paved the way for the use of scatological terms in modern drama.

Jarry's fame rests mainly on his play King Ubu(1896), which can be considered the first anti-play or the first model of this type of play. Critics agree on its uniqueness. Styan, for example, cites the words of Sacha Guitry, the French comedian to show this uniqueness:

> I believe it is a masterpiece of its kind. You will ask, what is its kind? That is very difficult to

> define, for it is neither strictly humour nor strictly parody. It is not related to any other form of literature... If I were forced to classify this phenomenon, I should put it first among excess caricature, ranking it with the most original and powerful burlesque of all time.[16]

The story of King Ubu is a caricature of the ruling class, who are depicted, especially in the personality of Ubu, as the embodiment of villainy and greed. The story is revealed in a non-realistic approach: actors wear masks and are conceived as puppets; one actor represents an army; and the slaughter of the aristocrats is symbolized by cutting the heads of forty life-size wicker mannequins, which are toppled into a pit.

The setting is likewise bizarre. The backcloth is to "show the interior and the exterior of a room simultaneously, and simultaneously contrast a torrid and arctic location. The effect was aggressively unreal, child-like and grotesque".[17]

With such caricature, non-realistic acting and setting, the intention was not so much to amuse the audience as to insult it. In fact, many people who came to the first performance expected to be scandalized. "After Stephan Mallarme,...after our own verse", wrote William Butler

Yeats, who was in the audience on the opening night, "What more is possible? After us the savage God".[18] In language, action, character, setting and theme, King Ubu negates the norms of traditional theatre. LaBelle considers King Ubu "a stentorian call for the overthrow of accepted assumptions of man, society, and cosmos; new forces were operating which necessitated new definitions and attitudes. Jarry saw that dramatists must break the chains of the past and seek a new dramaturgy to express the transformation of man and the forces which operated on him".[19]

- II -

During the First World War a number of movements began for show contempt to existing cultures and attempt at the same time to find alternatives in art by original thinking. Three of these movements that left their marks on contemporary art are: Futurism, Dadaism and Surrealism. To these movements, especially the first two, the inauguration of the anti-art notion is attributed.

The Futurists introduced new elements into the visual arts and music and a number of techniques in the theatrical art that was later used by Ionesco and Beckett. Because

they had new images of life they"actively sought direct confrontation with the audience.(They seem to have been the first to do so.)"[20]

In their manifestos, the Futurists condemn "traditional drama for being lengthy, analytic, and static, and propose in its stead a 'Synthetic' drama: 'that is, very brief. To compress into a few minutes, into a few words and gestures, innumerable situations, sensibilities, ideas, sensations, facts and symbols... Our acts can also be moments only a few seconds long.'"[21] Marinetti advocated music-hall, nightclub and circus techniques in the theatre and thus anticipated Beckett. Beckett -- who knows Italian -- also seems to have taken the idea of very short plays from the Futurists. For instance, Francesco Canguillo's short play or sintesi, as it was called by the Futurists, Detonation (1915) anticipates Beckett's Breath (1969), for in each of the two plays the curtain rises and falls for a short interval showing no characters but only a sound is heard, a shot in the former and a cry in the latter. Again the idea of disconnected monologue which has been used by Beckett and Pinter was used by Giocomo Balla in Disconnected States of Mind(1916). Marinetti's Feet (1915) shows only the feet of the actors, a technique used in Beckett's Not I, in which

only a mouth is seen. Some of the Futurists anticipated Ionesco in his image of furniture taking the place of man, in his use of proliferating bodies and in his provocation technique: planting actors in the auditorium and accusing spectators of killing.

The Dada movement is rightly considered the ancestor of anti-art and anti-literary groups that appeared during this century. The Dadaists used the same techniques as the Futurists. Their distinctive characteristic is their clear attack on the norms of art and literature. Looking at art from the perspective of the theory of relativity, but applying it to the extreme, Tzara says:"The work of art is never beautiful by degrees, objectively, for every one [...] criticism is therefore useless, it exists only subjectively, for every person... Thus DADA was born from a need for independence, for mistrust before community of ideas. Those who belong with us retain their liberty. We recognize no theory".[22] The Dadaists had no preconceived intentions about the art and literature they wanted. Their main aim was to negate. Roger Vitrac quotes Tzara saying",there is a very subtle way ... of destroying taste for literature. That is combating it with its own means and its own recipes".[23] Like the Futurists, the Dadaists made

exhibitions which incorporated their innovations. They read different poems simultaneously or read poems gathered from words cut from newspapers, read their manifestos, exhibited their visual art which showed objects from everyday life like bottles or broken bicycles, and performed plays. In all these they aimed at that provocation of the audience which is considered by Tzara as the basis of Dadaism.

The Surrealist movement which succeeded Dada differentiated itself from the preceding movement by trying to find some order or definition --- an act totally rejected by the Dadaists. Andre Breton (1896-1966), the spokesman of the Surrealist movement, was interested in Freud's theories about the unconscious. He defined Surrealism as"pure psychic automation, by which is intended to express, verbally in writing, or by other means, the real process of thought. Thought's dictation, in the absence of all control exercised by the reason and outside all aesthetic or moral preoccupation".[24]

The Surrealist contribution to the theatre can best be exemplified by the works of Guillaume Apollinaire(1880-1918) and Jean Cocteau(1892-1963), though they were not members of the movement. In Apollinaire's The Breasts of Tiresias (1917), for example, Therese releases her breasts to fly as

balloons and changes place with her husband, who delivers more than forty thousand offspring! Apollinaire was an enthusiastic advocate of the works of Jarry and the Futurists and attacked the well-made play, claiming that by dealing with inner states in mofd, freedom of movement is enhanced and action becomes closer to nature.

- III -

In 1926 Roger Vitrac (1899-1952) and Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) established the Theatre Alfred Jarry. This can be considered as both an acknowledgement of indebtedness to Jarry and a continuation of his approach to the theatre injected with new blood. The two men had affiliations with Dada and Surrealism but were dedicated to the theatre, a fact that is one of the reasons behind their break with these movements that led to their establishment of a theatre of their own.

Vitrac's play The Mystery of Love (1927), one of the few plays performed in the Theatre Alfred Jarry, portrays a sado-masochistic relationship between two lovers and can be considered "a sort of manifesto of the Theatre of Cruelty",[25] another type of theatre later advocated by

Artaud. During the action of the play there is much violence, even the killing of children. The stage becomes full of blood. The play also uses the technique of inter-communication between actors and audiences by planting actors in the auditorium. At one instance a member of the audience (a planted actor) is shot. To stress the role of the audience in the performance the lights are directed at them.

With Artaud we come to one of the most important men of the theatre in this century. As with Mallarmé, Artaud's significance in the theatre lies more in his theoretical work than in his work as a playwright or as a director. The following quick look at one of his plays, The Spurt of Blood (1927), a product at the end of his official relationship with the Surrealists, and at some of his ideas about the theatre, reveals both the cultural dilemma spoken about at the beginning of this chapter and the consequent search for alternatives to existing art forms.

Artaud's membership in the Surrealist movement enhanced his obsession with the study of his inner self and its relationship with his body. His journey into the realm of being is similar in many ways to Beckett's and, indeed, he anticipated him, Ionesco and Pinter in the treatment of the

subject of the fractured personality and also in the dramatization of states of delirium and madness. Artaud found himself suffering from the interference of the "others" in himself and may have influenced Beckett and through him Pinter in the dramatization of such a state of feeling.

Artaud's The Spurt of Blood "exemplifies Surrealist anti-theatre".[26] It gives rein to imagination and the result is a dream-like world: human parts fall on the stage while a bawd and a young man exchange banal phrases; a huge hand touches the bawd who shouts "leave me, God" and then bites the hand, making blood spurt on the stage; scorpions come out from under a nurse's skirt and a young woman who dies returns back to life. "In the name of an inner liberty", Artaud says, "of the exigencies of its peace, its perfection, its purity, it spits on you, world given over to dessicated reason, to the bemired mimetism of the centuries, and who have built your house of words and established your lists of precepts where the Surrealist spirit, the only one to which we owe being uprooted, can no longer explode".[27] In addition to the shock the play causes to religious feelings, the technique of the play shocks in its non-referential characterization and disconnected plot.

A reaction against the theatre, the Western theatre in particular, is also behind Artaud's idea of the Theatre of Cruelty. Believing in the real presence of evil, the theatre he aimed at is one which reveals the true nature of man, which is cruelty. Western language, to him, distorts reason and is not capable of expressing the truth of inner states of being. He saw in oriental acting and rituals a way of expressing the inexpressible. He advocated a new theatrical language that includes sounds, movements, light, contact with the audience, who must sit in the middle of the theatre to watch a performance which takes place in all directions.

These ideas belittle and sometimes abolish the role of the playwright, and the director takes his place. The actor's work changes also, because he is not supposed to impersonate a character but to use his body to express a state of being. Artaud could not put all his ideas into practice but his theories influenced a number of directors in Europe and America. His connection with Dada and Surrealism and his ideas of a non-verbal theatre make him a transitory anti-literary figure, for in the year he died (1948) Eugene Ionesco wrote The Bald Prima Donna, the first theatrical work to be called an "anti-play".

- IV -

After the Second World War pessimism dominated the works of a number of playwrights and a new type of anti-theatre was created. The subject matter of these playwrights was the human condition considered from a fundamental point of view. For most of them the dissatisfaction extended to secular culture as well as to the religious one.

A study of three of these playwrights helps in understanding the new anti-theatrical tendencies. The first, Eugene Ionesco, clarifies anti-theatre more in his theories than in his plays. The second, Peter Handke, shows us how even the role of language to narrate and describe is questioned by this playwright, who created plays that involve the present time only. And finally, Samuel Beckett, the master of anti-theatre, shows how this type of theatre revealed itself in the past three decades.

Eugene Ionesco is one of the best spokesmen of the anti-theatre tradition. He often illustrates the spirit of this tradition more in his theories than in his plays. As theories and ideas about the theatre can be seen as the

basis of Pinter's ideas, it might be useful to refer to their similar views in this survey.

Both Ionesco and Pinter have shown great opposition to a committed art and call for an art created free from ideologies. To Ionesco a commitment to an ideology hinders the artistic process, while a breakaway from "the utilitarian world is ... an indispensable uselessness, a purge and a rediscovery".[28] He is against bearing a message through literature.

> We must give the theatre its autonomy, liberate it from what is not itself, try to find again, in their purest essence within ourselves, the dramatic schemes that are eternal. To achieve it, destroy the usual, coherent, logical language; make a text a pretext for a play; liberate actors and spectators from the mania of intentional messages and other constraints, from their solitude, from themselves. A theatrical work has no <u>conscious</u> intention to teach anything at all; if it causes you to reflect, that is in spite of itself, and outside itself. It should tend only to liberate. Let us abandon ideologies, hidden intentions, and projects.[29]

Pinter, in his turn, considers that "the explicit form [...] in twentieth-century drama is [...] cheating. The playwright assumes that we have a great deal of information about all his characters, who explain themselves to the audience". What this amounts to, he explains, is

"conforming to the author's own ideology. [The characters] don't create themselves as they go along, they are being fixed on the stage for one purpose, to speak for the author, who has a point of view to put over".[30]

In the absence of a discursive message, Ionesco believes that intuition can achieve an unlimited freedom.

> Croce said that intuitive thought is the thought which is specific to literature and art, etc ... Art is the expression of intuitive thought and what interested me about Croce is that he provided, perhaps for the first time, a more secure means of knowing whether a work of art is valid or not.[31]

Intuition frees art from the burdens of laws and gives rein to imagination and dream. This is the central issue of the Pataphysics movement of which Ionesco has been one of the founders. It is a movement that stands against the dictatorship of science. It considers scientific laws provisional and concerned only with generalities. "Pataphysics is the science of the particular, of laws governing exceptions ... every event determines a law, a particular law".[32] In other words it is like saying "that there is no law, neither scientific, nor moral, nor aesthetic ... for Pataphysics, all things are equal; the 'scientific' and the 'nonsensical' weighed alike in the

scale of eternity, since both were arbitrary, both were absurd. In the scale of human values, however, the nonsensical' was preferable, since it allowed greater freedom to the mind of man".[33]

Pinter shows a similar inclination towards intuition, though without Ionesco's profound theorization. He says:

> I don't know what type of characters my plays will have until they[...] well, until they are. Until they indicate to me what they are[...] Once I've got the clues, I follow them - that's my job, really, to follow clues.[34]

However, in his reaction to existing theatrical forms, Ionesco does not show any compromise. In The Victim of Duty, Ionesco makes Choubert give this opinion of preceding and existing theatre:

> All the plays that have ever been written, from ancient Greece to the present day, have never been really anything but thrillers. Drama's always been realistic and there's always been a detective about. Every play is an investigation brought to a successful conclusion. There's a riddle, and it's solved in the final scene, sometimes earlier. You seek, and then you find. Might as well give the game away at the start.[35]

Ionesco, in fact, claims a unique position in the history of the theatre. In his diary entry for the tenth of April

1951, he summed up his aim of writing The Bald Prima Donna as an attempt

> to make the mechanics of drama function in a vacuum. An experiment in abstract or non-representational drama ... The aim is to release dramatic tension without the help of any proper plot or any special subject. But it still leads, in the end, to the revelation of something monstrous: this is essential, moreover, for in the last resort drama is a revelation of monstrosity or of some monstrous formless state of being or of monstrous forms that we carry in ourselves. Abstract theatre. Pure drama. Anti-thematic, anti-ideological, anti-social-realist, anti-philosophical, anti-boulevard psychology, anti-bourgeois, the rediscovery of a new 'free' theatre ... characters without character. Puppets. Faceless creatures.[36]

After these last words of Ionesco, Pinter's criticism of existing theatre will look bashful. Pinter says",The professional theatre, whatever the virtues it undoubtedly possesses, is a world of false climaxes, calculated tension, some hysteria, and a great deal of inefficiency".(I, 10)

In his plays, Ionesco also does not compromise, despite the many gaps one finds between his theories and their application. He has been consistent in his attempts to create a "abstract" and a "non-representational" drama. Moreover, the language he creates not only reveals a problem of communication but also shows an unease with the role of

language as an expression of a culture. In The Lesson, the language becomes, to Ionesco, "a game --- game without words ... This language [the language of philosophy] is empty. It no longer corresponds to anything. A sort of emptiness of language and a refusal for its call to culture".[37] The death of the pupil and the death of the old couple in The Chairs is blamed on language. In his Notes and Counter-Notes, Ionesco explains why the language of The Bald Prima Donna has become so non-referential:

> For me what has happened was a kind of collapse of reality. The words had turned into sounding shells devoid of meaning. The characters too, of course, had been emptied of psychology and the world appeared to me in an unearthly, perhaps it is true, light, beyond understanding and governed by arbitrary laws.[38]

When language loses its logical meaning and becomes empty, the created characters become "without character", as Ionesco has observed. Since childhood, Ionesco has been interested in caricature and Grand Guignol. His first characters the Smiths and the Martins lose their identity and exchange roles as if they are in a cartoon film. The same idea can be felt in The Chairs, where the octogenarians move about the theatre talking to chairs. In Rhinoceros people grow horns and in The New Tenant a man is suffocated

by furniture.

Again, Ionesco's anti-theatre tendency has led him to create bizarre sets for his plays and to invent grotesque objects which proliferate on the stage. These elements, together with the unrealistic characters, help in creating effective abstract images of the human situation. The death of love in contemporary life, for example, is cleverly epitomized in the proliferating corpse in Amedee.

The development of anti-theatre in the second half of this century in the hands of Beckett and Peter Handke has given to this tradition deeper philosophical roots. The tendency to negate has become less arbitrary and more conscious of its aims and artistic motives.

Peter Handke (1942 -) has acquired international fame because of the philosophical background of his drama and because of the originality of his experiments. Though he is young, Handke is considered one of the greatest playwrights of the age.[39] His art supports the view put forward in this thesis that, in an age of uncertainty and searching for identity, originality has a greater claim to greatness than any derivative art.

Handke's theatre is centred on language and its relationship with reality. His attempts to create a theatrical language of clarity and precision is often related to Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophical arguments about language. To Wittgenstein language is a kind of a game which, especially in the philosophical study of metaphysical questions, creates a lot of confusion that originates from a misunderstanding of our ordinary use of words. " 'We do not realize that we calculate, operate with words', he wrote, and spoke of his actions as 'bring[ing] words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use'".[40]

What Wittgenstein applies to philosophy, Peter Handke applies to literature and particularly to the theatre, as Richard Gilman has put it:

> Peter Handke might say that what he has done is to have brought words back from their traditional 'dramatic' or literary use, their existence as elements of unfolding narratives which provide surrogate emotional or moral experience, and placed them directly before us, in their own right, so to speak. His plays demonstrate how we operate with words and are operated upon by them; what they reject is language thought of as containing meanings requiring no further investigation, language employed to communicate pre-existing truths about the world and our natures.[41]

Right from the beginning of his career, Handke has started to attack conventional writing by claiming that its language is unreal. The language of literature, he claims, is only descriptive or narrative. Like Ionesco he stands firmly against the make-believe but he overshadows him, and even Beckett in certain aspects, in his attempts to negate it. He wrote:

> The theatre as it was was for me a relic from a past era. Even Beckett and Brecht had nothing to do with me. Stories on the stage did not work for me; instead of being simple, they are always only simplification. The possibilities of reality were limited by the impossibilities of the stage.[42]

What is reality, and how can Handke present it on the stage? It is not easy to define Handke's concept of reality because it depends on a number of negations. It is easier to say what his reality is not. Nicholas Hern lists these negations:

> It rejects fiction, symbols, metaphors, even comparison; it rejects description, illusion, subjectivity, empathy; one is left with clinical impersonality, which owes something to Robbe-Grillet's implacable attempts at objectivity and more to Wittgenstein's equally implacable logic; one is left with words, which Handke entrusts with absolute meaning; and paradoxically and unavoidably one is left with Handke.[43]

One is really left with what Handke calls "pure play". In pure play the actors do not impersonate characters but live with the audience at the same period of time, the present, or live the steps of a process not related to any specific time. Handke achieves the highest level of his "pure play" in what he called "the speak-ins"(Sprechstucke), of which Offending the Audience is the most famous piece. In this anti-play four people or "speakers", as he calls them, appear on a bare stage and recite sixty-six passages, addressing them to the audience. Soon the audience discovers that it is not going to experience the traditional action of drama as the communication of emotion in stylized ways. One of the speakers recites:

> .. This is no play. We don't step out of the play to address you. We have no illusions to disillusion you. We show you nothing. We are playing no destinies. We are playing no dreams. This not a factual report. This is no documentary play. This is no slice of life. We don't tell you a story. We don't perform any action. We don't represent anything. We don't put anything on for you. We only speak. We play by addressing you ...[44]

The audience also discovers that its presence in the auditorium is the subject of the play. "Your presence", a speaker tells the audience, "is the topic we deal with from one breath to the next, from one moment to the next, from

one word to the next.... You are the subject".[45]

After keeping the audience alert to its presence in the theatre by keeping it aware of all the traditional illusion in the world of the theatre, the playwright finally couples his aversion to traditional drama with a show of unease towards its public. This is expressed in the sixty-four insults which carry the name of the piece.

The witty insults are alternated with praise of the audience for its performance. The traditional critical categories for actors are applied to the audience: "You were true to life" the audience is told, "You were realistic. You've put everything under your spell. You reached Shakespearean heights".[46] The insults also include:

> You windbags ... you gargoyles ... You chicken-shits ... you wrong numbers ... You would be revolutionaries, you reactionaries, you ivory tower artists, you defeatists ... you communists, you vigilantes ... you abortions, you bitches and bastards ... you phonies. You milestones in the history of the theatre ... You positive heroes ... You anti-heroes. You everyday heroes....You mafiosos ... You who embrace life. You who detest life. You who have no feeling about life ... You brothers and sisters, you comrades you, ... you fellow humans you.
>
> You were welcome here. We thank you. Good

night.[47]

The paragraphs which constitute the play do conform to the non-descriptive and non-illusive style Handke calls for. These paragraphs develop one topic, statement or affirmative proposition. He aims at clarity and precision and so his sentences define and redefine each other, leaving no room for any type of ambiguity. A "Speaker" says:

> Because we speak to you, you can become conscious of yourself ... You become aware that you are sitting. You become aware that you are sitting in the theatre. You become aware of the size of your limbs ... You become aware of the flow of saliva ... You become aware of our words entering your ears. You acquire presence of mind.[48]

Kaspar, Handke's first full-length play, is a mature application of the playwright's theory of pure play. The play exposes a process rather than a story about its central character Kaspar, who is historically a young man that was found in his late teens in the streets of Nuremberg after being imprisoned and isolated since childhood. Handke's aim in writing the play was not to narrate the story but to use the personality of Kaspar as a prototype.

Kaspar first appears from the slit of the curtains dressed in highly theatrical style with a mask on his face. In this way the historical relationship to the real Kaspar is abstracted as much as the only sentence he knows, which now reads, "I would like to become such as someone else once was"[49]. After roaming the room like a child, Kaspar is awakened by three invisible "prompters" (Einsagners), who address him on loud speakers. The process of constructing Kaspar's personality through language begins. Through the only sentence he knows, they make him aware of his presence, "with this sentence you can make yourself noticeable in the dark, so no one will think you are an animal ... The sentence is more useful to you than a word".[50] The teaching process goes through different stages until he becomes aware of his existence and utters a sentence like, "I am who I am".[51] When a number of Kaspars appear and demonstrate to the original the acts of movement, pain and noise, he at first becomes fascinated by his abilities, yet later he discovers that he is a victim of knowledge. Language has socialized him but, at the same time, deprived him of his individuality. In the end Kaspar and his doubles die. His last words: "I am only accidentally I", reveal his tragic loss of his identity.

In other plays such as The Ride Across Lake Constance Handke makes the action consist of language games. The games are not like Beckett's mainly philosophical meditations, but an ofvestigation in language use. The Ride Across Lake Constance creates an atmosphere of dream, in which the characters exchange sentences which do not refer to their situations. The meaning of this difficult play may be inferred from its title, which refers to a legendary story of a horseman who crossed on his horse a frozen lake by mistake. When he realised the fact he fell dead. The play may imply that in life we think that we understand our situation but this is not the case. The reality of our situation is obscured by language. We accept certain concepts because of the force of habit or because of the influence of others on us, as the following dialogue indicates.

> PORTEN: ... Do you know the expression "put you hands on your head"?
> GEORGE: (Looking at JANNINGS, then replying). Certainly.
> PORTEN: Why do you look at him before answering?
> GEORGE: It's a habit.
> PORTEN: Put your hand on you head!
> He hesitates
> Did you hear what I said?
> GEORGE:(Again looking at JANNINGS first). I'm still thinking about it.
> PORTEN: But the expression exists, doesn't it?[52]

The dialogue of the play does not grow out of a situational context and the realistic tone in the play is merely a parody of conversational drama. The audience cannot fail to notice that the situation is unrealistic because the characters keep questioning each other about dream and reality.

There is no evidence that the ideas and practices of the writers studied in this chapter have their direct influence on Harold Pinter, yet as he himself has observed "you do not write in a vacuum; you are bound to absorb and digest other writing".[53] The story of the development of anti-theatre in this chapter delineates the origins of some of Pinter's experiments which he culled from this tradition. Pinter, as will be shown in Part two, has taken the one-actor play technique from Mallarme via Beckett. His static drama is related to that of Maeterlinck and Beckett. The violence and cruelty of his plays come from the tradition of Maeterlinck, Jarry, Artaud and Ionesco. His concept of an uncommitted and purely subjective drama can be traced back to the theories of Dada and the Surrealists and then to Ionesco. His language games have affinities with those of Beckett, Ionesco and Handke. The ambiguity in his art is related to the mystification manifested in different

forms in this tradition. And above all, Pinter's tendency to create problems with a spirit of fatality finds its main origin in anti-theatre. Yet the similarity is only marginal, for, as is clearly seen in this chapter, the drama created by anti-art is one with little or no compromise with realism.

Notes

1. Eugene Ionesco, "Theatre and Anti-theatre", trans. by Leonard C. Pronko, Theatre Arts, Vol. XLII, No. 6, June 1958, p.18.

2. Ronald Hayman, Theatre and Anti-theatre: New Movements Since Beckett (London: Secker & Warburg, 1979), p. 99.

3. Ibid. pp. xi-xii.

4. Nicholas Hern, Peter Handke: Theatre and Anti-theatre, Modern German Authors, Texts and Contexts, Vol. Five(London: Oswald Wolff, 1971), p.37.

5. Cited in Oscar G Brockett and R. Findlay, Century of Innovation: A History of European and American Drama Since 1870(Englewoodcliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973), p. 591.

6. Cited in Hayman, Theatre and Anti-theatre, p. 21.

7. Century of Innovation, p.123.

8. Century of Innovation, p. 299.

9. Ibid. p. 269.

10. Ibid. p. 125.

11. Modern Drama in Theory and Practice, Vol. II, p. 29.

12. Alfred Jarry: Nihilism and the Theatre of the Absurd, (New York & London: New York University Press, 1980), p. 1.

13. Ibid. pp. 37-38.

14. Alfred Jarry, "The Misery of Man", 3 may 1888, cited in Alfred Jarry: Nihilism and the Theatre of the Absurd, p. 13.

15. Poetics, p. 59. Cited in Alfred Jarry, p. 74.

16. Modern Drama in Theory and Practice, Vol. 2, p. 45.

17. Ibid. p.46.

18. Cited in Century of Innovation, p. 138.

19. Alfred Jarry, p. 168.

20. Century of Innovation, p. 290.

21. Ibid. p.291. The quotation is from "The Futurist Synthetic Theatre"(1915), written by Marinetti, Emilio Settinelli and Bruno Corra.

22. Cited in J.H.Matthews, Theatre in Dada and Surrealism (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press.1974), p. 11.

23. "T. Tzara va Cultiver Ses Vices", Le Journal du Peuple, 14 April 1923, cited in Theatre in Dada and Surrealism, p.18.

24. Century of Innovation. p. 299.

25. John Russell Taylor, The Penguin Dictionary of Theatre(Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p. 289.

26. Theatre in Dada and Surrealism, p. 138.

27. Ibid. p.138, quoting the Bureau of Surrealist Research.

28. Eugene Ionesco, "Theatre and anti-theatre", Theatre Arts, p.77.

29. Ibid., p. 18.

30. Harold Pinter, interview with John Sherwood on BBC European Service on 3 March 1960, cited in Steven H. Gale, Butter's Going Up: A Critical Study of Harold Pinter's Work(Durham, New Carolina: Duke University Press, 1977), pp. 253-4.

31. Ronald Hayman, Eugene Ionesco(London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 2.

32. M. Beigbender, La Theatre en France depuis la Liberation (Paris, 1959), pp. 34-5, cited in Richard Coe, Ionesco: A Study of his Plays(London: Methuen, 1971), p. 33.

33. Coe, p.33.

34. Cited in Walter Kerr, Harold Pinter, Columbia Essays on Modern Writers(New York & London: Columbia University Press, 1967),p.36.

35. Eugene Ionesco, Plays, Vol. II(London: John Calder, 1978), p.269.

36. Hayman, Theatre and Anti-theatre, p. 54.

37. Hayman, Ionesco, p.4.

38. Ibid. p. 13.

39. In his book The Making of Modern Drama(New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1974), Richard Gilman includes Handke in his study of the greatest playwrights of the age: Buchner, Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov, Pirandello, Brecht and Beckett.

40. Ludwig Wittgenstein as cited by Gilman, p. 268.

41. Gilman, pp. 270-1.

42. Peter Handke, as cited in Nicholas Hern, Peter Handke: Theatre and Anti-theatre, p. 39.

43. Hern, p. 23.

44. Peter Handke, Offending the Audience & Self-Accusation(London: Methuen, 1971), p.15.

45. Ibid. pp.19-20.

46. Ibid p. 36.

47. Ibid. p. 37-8.

48. Ibid. pp. 26-7.

49. Styan, Modern Drama Vol. II. p. 140.

50. Conversations, cited in Hayman, Ionesco, pp. 11-12.

51. Hayman, Ionesco, p. 13.

52. Peter Handke, The Ride Across Lake Constance(London: Eyre Methuen, 1973), p. 71. The play was first staged in Britain in 1971.

53.Harry Thompson, "Harold Pinter Replies", New Theatre Magazine, 2, January 1961, pp.8-9, cited in Bernard F. Dukore, Harold Pinter, Macmillan Modern Dramatists(London & Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press , 1982), p. 117.

CHAPTER TWO

SAMUEL BECKETT: THE EXEMPLAR OF ANTI-THEATRE

There is no doubt that by his contribution to contemporary drama Samuel Beckett has reversed many well-established theatrical conventions and has set up new norms in their place. He has done this either by dramatizing old metaphors about life and the stage, and their similarity, or by introducing into the theatre elements from other media. The central motive that stands behind his art is the spirit of negation that has worked its way deep into both the content and form of his drama. His genius lies in his ability to create from this negation an art that frames it properly: he refutes religion and philosophy by using their own procedures such as the religious meditation and the philosophical methods of reduction, reflection and dialectic. He successfully presents the notion of the absurdity of the world by giving it aesthetic forms. Moreover, his tendency to negate reaches further still, deep into the art of writing itself, which he conceives as the expression of ignorance and impotence. This is clear in his presentation of contrasting

ideas, in his creation of anti-heroes and in his use of disconnected and contradictory language, which is the vehicle of such ignorance and impotence. Consequently his plays are anti-realistic but they have their own level of lifelikeness which is mainly hidden behind grotesque objects, outlandish settings and theatrical language. And like most anti-artists Beckett has an ambivalent attitude towards the audience: on one hand he offends it mildly and on the other hand he does not deny it the opportunity of laughing even at what he considers to be its own miserable condition.

The challenging nature of Beckett's drama has inspired many playwrights since the two intellectual clowns of Waiting for Godot appeared on the stage to do nothing of importance but to await with the audience the coming of an unknown figure named Godot. The mystification, the minimal use of language, the incomplete presentation of character and the fatalism of the play have without doubt made it possible for Harold Pinter to start writing plays in an experimental manner. Pinter's knowledge of Beckett goes back to 1949, when he read a fragment of Watt in an Irish journal. From that time on Pinter read every postwar work written by Beckett. Pinter acknowledges the influence of Beckett upon him. He told Lawrence M. Bensky that "Beckett and Kafka stayed with me most — I think Beckett is the best

prose writer living. My work is still bound up by other writers -- that is one of the best things in it".[1] After writing his first few plays, Pinter was widely regarded as a disciple of and successor to Beckett. Pinter wrote to Beckett showing his admiration and met him in Paris in 1961, and from that time Pinter began to send copies of his plays to Beckett in order to consult him about them before they were performed.[2] Moreover, Pinter has often shown his concern about the new works of Beckett. For instance, he attended a rehearsal of Krapp's Last Tape and cabled Beckett when he did not like the adlibbing of the performer. Beckett was "disturbed by Pinter's adverse reaction and ordered the producer to delete the lines".[3] Another example of Pinter's deep knowledge of Beckett is seen in Pinter's use of the titles of two translations done by Beckett as the titles of his own plays. In 1930 Beckett translated three essays from Italian, [4] two of which are 'Landscape'and 'The Homecoming', and I do not think the terms are used by Pinter by mere coincidence.

However, to say that Pinter is a disciple of Beckett is a statement that needs qualification. On one hand, there is Pinter's Jewish origin and his experience as a result of this, which made him sense his own type of menace. In addition, his experience in acting has given him an insight into the demands of the profession. This insight has helped

him in knowing how to keep an audience interested, though he gives it only a little of what it usually expects from a playwright. On the other hand, Beckett's artistic asceticism and his deep desire to revolutionize theatrical techniques is very hard to follow. "An author", says Bell Gale Chevigny, "who seeks in each work to write the last word, who never knows where the next work is coming from, and who is convinced that he cannot follow himself should not be expected to father a school. Those who resemble him somewhat cease doing so when they cannot withstand the temptation of vitality, or meaning, or change".[5] Chevigny was probably thinking of Pinter when he made this comment, for Pinter could not, in fact, resist the temptation of the vitality of melodrama. The affinity of Pinter to Beckett is undermined when the roots of Beckett's theatre are studied. The following study of Beckett's drama, will, I hope, make it clear that certain aspects of Beckett's drama are difficult to imitate, though his influence on the general direction of Pinter's drama is clearly very great.

Before the publication of Deirdre Bair's biography of Samuel Beckett in 1978, [6] the general impression of Beckett's works was that they represent an exclusively literary vision. But Bair's book makes it clear that Beckett's life stands behind his art. Most of his novels are autobiographical and his plays, which in a sense are a

continuation of his novels, are a masked presentation of his personal experiences, whether physical or mental. The physical suffering of Beckett himself and that of members of his family have made him very sensitive to the fundamental issues of life and existence. Like the other artists discussed in Chapter One, he painfully involves himself in a search for himself. The result, as we shall see, is a sad journey that has led to no revelation. Neither religion nor philosophy could pull Beckett out of the abyss of pain and doubt in which he lived most of his life.

Beckett's attitude towards religion is a controversial one but, from what he himself has confessed and from the bulk of his agnostic images and ironic metaphors about religion, it is easy to cast him with confidence as a non-believer. In 1934 Beckett told McGreevy that people "were totally alone; there was no community of thought and feeling, only the inner man had any importance. Each was as alien to all others as to a protoplast or God, incapable of loving or hating anyone but himself, or of being loved or hated by anyone but himself".[7] In another letter in 1935 he told him that he could not believe in anything and that his only relief was what he called "baroque solipsism".[8] In the course of this solipsism Beckett records his feelings about religious matters, but this does not mean that he takes them seriously. "Like all literary devices", Beckett

replies to those who consider him a believer in the Bible, "I use it where it suits me. But to say that I have been profoundly affected by it in daily reading and otherwise is utter nonsense".[9]

The above statement explains the presence of many religious discussions and hints in his major plays. In Godot the dialogue between Vladimir and Estragon is considered by many critics as a type of monologue or internal meditation about religion and existence. The phrases and sentences they exchange cancel one another out, making the play as a whole an extended irony on man's sincerity towards the external power represented by Godot. The play implies that redemption and reward are illusions. Unlike Maeterlinck's dead priest in The Blinds, Godot sends messengers but does not end the problems of ignorance and impotence suffered by the characters. They become waiting for "nothing". Their situation is similar to that of the legendary Tantalus. They have some clues that make them desire things they cannot fulfil. In this respect the theme of the absurdity of life acquires a negative dimension. It is not only a loss of mind and reason, as in Ionesco's The Bald Prima Donna, for example, but a kind of evil determinism. In Endgame the situation is even worse. Hamm and Clov are reduced to mere sufferers with few choices, all of which are dark. The ghost of death dominates them. In

such a situation they try to pray for and contemplate a possible salvation but that comes to nothing. "That bastard!" Hamm shouts in protest against God", He does not exist".[10]

In Western culture talk about the absurdity of life used to be a kind of catharsis, a way of asking for help. In literature it becomes a literary device, a metaphor. Shakespeare, for example, makes Macbeth say after he hears of his wife's death:

> ... Out, out brief candle!
> Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
> And then is heard no more. It is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing.[11]

But the idea of a meaningful life dominates Shakespeare's art. The image of the world as a stage is an old one but until the modern age the "theatrum mundi metaphor was derived from the idea that God was the sole spectator of man's actions on the stage of life".[12] In modern theatre we began to hear that "there can be no God", as in Buchner's Danton's Death,[13] and see the hand of God bitten by a bawd as in Artaud's The Spurt of Blood. Beckett depicts an image of God that is totally different from that of a loving and caring God through his dramatization of man's loneliness and suffering.

Moreover, in the dialectic of Beckett's art the absence and presence of the Absolute or God intermingle and this in itself, as implied by Beckett, is "inexplicable".[14] in such a view, the absence makes us free but bewildered at the source of this freedom and the presence leads to expectations that are thwarted by the possibility of the absence.

In a universe without absolutes, Beckett considers his task as a writer to be one of finding a "form that accommodates the mess".[15] The "mess" or "confusion", as he explains in Proust, includes both the external world or the "aliment", as he calls it, and the artistic self or "its manner of dispatch".[16] In what follows we speak first about the "mess" as he sees it in the philosophical interpretation of life and secondly within man himself.

As in the case of religion, Beckett uses philosophy against itself. As we shall see, he uses the dialectic of Hegel, the reduction of Husserl and the negation of Sartre to show man's misery as seen by these philosophers. Again, his resort in his life to the pessimistic philosophy of Schopenhauer sheds some light on his dark view of life.

It is difficult to attach Beckett to a specific literary or philosophic movement. Katharine Worth lists some of the different movements which claim Beckett's support and sympathy and adds, "any of these views can be persuasive, any of them claiming to be exclusive must be off the mark. Beckett can only be surely placed as a man of many facets, the writer above all who has sensed the deep movements of the modern imagination and found spell bounding images to express them".[17]Eugene Webb's explanation of this multi-faceted approach to philosophy is the one that is closest to the truth and agrees with the general critical approach to Beckett's art. He says: "when we study philosophy in the context of Beckett's novels and plays, it is only for the purpose of sweeping philosophy away".[18] Webb attributes this to the repeated attempt in history to

> fit one metaphysical system or another on reality which has led over and over again to the Angst that grows out of a combined sense of uprootedness, nostalgia, impotence and despair. Our own time feels this Angst with particular intensity, and it is also perhaps the first period in history that instead of trying to flee from the comfort of this into still another system is taking a critical look not only at the failed systems, but also at the very ideal of systematic understanding as such.[19]

Beckett's approach to philosophy becomes an artistic process that reveals the contradictions in every system he exposes. In this context, we see Beckett as one of the

first artists to use philosophy to such depth without commitment.

David Hesla draws comparisons between the philosophical approaches of, for example, Hegel, Husserl and Sartre, and the artistic creation of Beckett. By this comparison he does not mean "to impute to Beckett a close acquaintance with any of the philosophical systems...",[20] for they are in the background of Western thought and Beckett's interest in man's consciousness of the world could be behind his employment of these systems. The stress on consciousness, Hesla concludes, is a result of "the absence of the Absolutes of justice, intelligibility, and charity... from the world",[21] as seen by Beckett. But consciousness itself is also seen as far from being an absolute. "There is no Absolute ego, for in reality the Ego must be thought of as an indefinite succession of egos(Bergson), or as self-contradictory (Hegel), or as a process of becoming (Kierkegaard), or as Nothingness (Sartre)".[22]

Beckett uses the dialectic of these philosophers in his work. In Godot the compassion of Vladimir and Estragon is contrasted with the master-slave relationship of Pozzo and Lucky. Each pair also exposes two complementary traits and makes them depend on each other: in the first the mutual relationship of the body and the mind and in the second the

authority and the individual. A similar clash of opposites is seen in the relationship of Hamm and Clov in Endgame. But in this juxtaposition of elements the nothingness of Sartre is the resting point, for the dialectic cannot continue for ever in a piece of art. Thus, right from the beginning Didi and Gogo agree that "Nothing can be done".

Beckett also uses Husserl's method of phenomenological reduction. The philosopher Edmund Husserl imitates Descartes' method of doubt but extends it to include the Ego itself, which Descartes considers an absolute. The purpose of this doubt is to arrive at the certainty that has been lost in contemporary philosophies. To do this, Husserl calls on the thinker to purify his consciousness from any prejudice or a priori knowledge in order to go "back to the things themselves" with a transcendental consciousness. This transcendental consciousness can not only grasp the phenomenon of things directly but is also aware of the process of consciousness itself. In other words, the transcendental consciousness is not the ego but the consciousness of this ego. To Husserl the motif of this transcendental consciousness is the

> questioning back to the last source of all achievements of knowledge, of reflection in which the knower reflects on himself and his knowing life, in which all the scientific constructs which have validity for him, occur teleologically, and as permanent acquisitions are kept and become freely

available to him.[23]

Husserl names his method phenomenological reductionism, because it reduces or "brackets" the things in themselves in order to achieve a pure consciousness of the phenomena in nature. His philosophy is considered one of the positive views of man's ability to deal with the world with confidence. Yet like any other philosophy it has weak points, especially in defining the transcendental consciousness itself. To Leszek Kolakowski "the distinction between psychological and transcendental ego... is an illusory intelligibility. The transcendental Ego is an empty recipient of cognitive content and nothing else...".[24] Moreover, the method itself implies a continuous process of consciousness, in which a consciousness becomes aware of a consciousness which in its turn becomes aware of a consciousness ... and so on. Husserl argues that the transcendental Ego is immune from phenomenological reductions because the unity of consciousness is achieved through the unity of the transcendental object, but this is rejected by Sartre, who considers that there is a gap between the consciousness of the object and the consciousness of consciousness.[25]

Beckett depicts this split in consciousness in his plays, especially Not I and Happy Days. The reduction in his plays does not lead to certainty but to a picture full of contradictions and confusion. Hesla has noticed that

> The doctrine of the absolute absence of the Absolute operates in Beckett's works analogously with the way the phenomenological reduction operates in Husserl's. As Husserl "bracketed" the world and the natural standpoint, Beckett "brackets" the world and its Absolutes. By means of the eidetic reduction, Husserl established the autonomy of consciousness; by means of what we may call the "aesthetic reduction", Beckett established the autonomy of art. Liberated from the theories of the relation of an extrinsic and absolute reality to itself, art no longer must conform to a supposed "essential nature" but is radically free to define itself in the very process of being itself. Absolutes which obtained in the Dantean cosmos -- The Beginning and The Ending, the irreversibility of time, causality, purpose, justice, wholeness -- no longer govern the work of art.[26]

In Beckett's plays man is "bracketed" outside society and sometimes outside his body. The characters of most of his full-length plays are mere humans living outside place and time. In Not I the darkening of the stage to reveal a mouth only is a reduction of man to speaking consciousness. In Quad we see movement and rhythm only. The reduction reaches its climax in Breath which lasts only one minute and the human presence is minimized to a breath. In fact the reduction beams out from every aspect of his art and the result is a depiction of the roots of man's misery.

Moreover Schopenhauer has been Beckett's resort in the hours of sadness. Schopenhauer is "one of the ones that mattered most to me",[27] Beckett once told McGreevy. The recurrence of many of Schopenhauer's images in Beckett's plays support the idea of the deep influence of "the philosopher of pessimism " on Beckett. If Beckett had not involved himself in direct talk about the Schopenhauerean theory of the Will of life, he, nevertheless, deals with its different manifestations. In his book Schopenhauer Thomas Whittaker asserts that to Schopenhauer "character is unmodifiable, though, knowledge, it is allowed, may change the mode of action with the limits of the particular character"[28]. This is also true of Beckett's characters who do not really change. To Schopenhauer happiness is an illusion and this is clear in most of Beckett's plays, especially Happy Days. Again, to Schopenhauer the changeable world is merely an illusion, there is beneath the appearance of the world an entity that wills. This is the reality that one must seek.[29] As has been said before, Beckett "brackets" man outside his society and depicts him imprisoned by mysterious powers both in himself and in the world. However, unlike Schopenhauer, who thinks that art is a means of liberation because it is a "will-less" way of viewing things, Beckett does not give his characters this freedom, although his art as a whole is free from most of

the traditional rules. Beckett uses his artistic freedom to show how man lacks freedom in real life. Thus the power of the Will could be seen in Beckett as both liberating and constraining at the same time.

Beckett's rotation around the theme of the self and its nature is not unrelated to both the literary and cultural standards of the age". In the occidental tradition", says Eric Sellin",with the destruction of God and the extraterrestrial hope he provided, man's philosophical quest turned, of necessity, inward".[30] However the inward reflection of Beckett is not the type that has a messianic nature but rather a reflection that feels and conceives the vacuum man is wrapped in. His genius is in dramatizing the fundamental elements that imprison the self and hinder it from knowing or achieving itself. Many of the negative attitudes concerning man in general and the artistic self in particular, were developed by Beckett through his direct and indirect contact with other centripetal(self-centred) artists like Rimbaud, Jules Renard, Marcel Proust and James Joyce.

Beckett studied Rimbaud and was affected by his tendency to silence, as is clear from his unpublished Dream of Fair to Middling Women where Belacqua comments with admiration on Rimbaud's "incoherent continuum ... whose

statements serve merely to delimit the reality of insane areas of silence, whose audibilities are no more than puncuations in a statement of silences".[31] Beckett, therefore, obviously knows of the split of personality felt by Rimbaud and his insistence that "It is misleading to say 'I think'. One should say 'I am being thought'".[32]

Beckett is also fascinated by Jules Renard's ability to live completely within himself. Renard eschewed people and kept a journal of his life for twenty four years. He wrote of the slightest and the minutest details of feeling and physical experience. Beckett admits that he learned from him the reference to commonplace natural functions such as chewing and pissing, which he successfully uses in Godot and Krapp. Beckett is probably the writer who imparted to Pinter Rimbaud's silence and split personality and Renard's minute details. Beckett is also influenced by Marcel Proust and James Joyce. Hayman considers that "Waiting for Godot would not be what it is if Beckett has not proceeded from a deep involvement in the work of Joyce to a deep involvement in the work of Proust".[33] Hesla considers Beckett's evaluations of Proust and Joyce are applicable to Beckett himself: he takes from Proust the idea that "we are rather in the position of Tantalus" and from Joyce "the absolute absence of Absolute".[34] Beckett's secluded life, his passive response to the outside world is in many ways

similar to Proust's, but while Proust could not leave his subjectivity, Beckett was able to go out to the world through abstraction, minimal and elemental art. In his plays Beckett dramatizes elements used by Proust, such as time, habit and friendship, but gives them universal meaning that is yet more negative than Proust's. Proust's A La Recherche du Temps Perdu(Remembrance of Things Past) "is ostensibly about the irrecoverability of time lost, about the forfeiture of innocence through experience, the emptiness of love and friendship, the vanity of human endeavour, the triumph of sin and despair; but Proust's conclusion is that the life of every day is supremely important, full of moral joy and beauty, which, though man may lose them through faults inherent in human nature, are indestructible and recoverable".[35] But for Beckett even this limited gift of every day life is not possible. In fact, for Beckett there is no conclusion. He is not working "towards omniscience and omnipotence" like Joyce,but with "impotence and ignorance".[36] Beckett's Happy Days, which deals, in one of its themes, with every day experiences, makes them illusions of happiness, for the habits are not our true existence". 'If there was no such thing as habit,' says Proust, 'life would of necessity appear delicious to all those whom death would threaten at every moment, that is to say to all mankind.' But for Beckett it is 'the suffering

of being' that supervenes, when habit fails in its fundamental duty, which is to preserve 'the boredom of living' ".[37]

The author, in Beckett's way of seeing things, is the opposite of the omniscient and omnipotent traditional author who knows everything about his characters and who envisages a moral purpose behind his creation. To Beckett, as has been quoted before, the job of the artist is to reveal the failure and the weakness of man. Beckett speaks of an art that is "weary of pretending to be able, of being able, of doing a little better the same old thing, of going a little further along a dreary road".[38] His anti-literary stance stems from this a perspective, though his writing has become part of the literature he abhors. In 1935, he "decided that all English literature was based on banality, typification and simplification which amounted to nothing more than a mere listing of the vices and virtues. From Austen to Aldington, he proclaimed, English literature was straight out of the Chester Cycle".[39]

In Beckett's major plays many questions remain unanswered. In Godot the two tramps know only that they are waiting for an unkown visitor called Godot. During the waiting they are not only unsure about the purpose of the waiting, but are in doubt of their presence and so they try

to prove it. "The tramps are compelled to speak", says Richard Gilman, " are indeed, as Estragon says, 'incapable of keeping silent,' just as we are, since it is only through our words, those most abstract and insubstantial of our possessions, that we overcome -- temporarily and with an illusory solace -- our actor-like isolation and sense of arbitrary being".[40] The author has nothing to offer to those miserable humans and this is characteristic of anti-theatre, as has been said above. Beckett has told the critics that he does not know who Godot is and what he most probably means is that he does not know the meaning of our existence.

Endgame also depicts the limitations both in art and in real life. The chronicle Hamm is trying to finish needs "other characters ... But where I would find them?"(p. 37) Man is facing death, facing the end. New characters or new humans would not change this fact. Beckett is "neither deus enough nor ex machina enough to bring their situation to a successful resolution".[41] This was his feeling while still writing Dreams of Fair to Middling Women and is probably his feeling while writing most of his plays. As a result of this artistic limitation the presentation of the plays is not consequential. Interpretation is difficult and as Richard Goldman suggests the only way of understanding Beckett is through Beckett's own theory of failure.

> The critics who attempt to link Clov's discovery through the telescope with Hamm's pronouncement are obeying the instinct of a mind trained to make meaningful connections, sure that such connections must be what the artist is after. But is he? The numerous indicated pauses in the play are utterly unlike the fraught silences in Harold Pinter's The Homecoming. There, the gaps are full of tension, electricity, strategy, and are hence connective. But those in Endgame are disjunctive -- they mark a failure of reason, of energy, of attention. When speech resumes, the subject is changed. We are not meant to put two and two together.[42]

Like the plays discussed in Chapter One there is no causality in Endgame and the impact it leaves on its audience is imparted through the mood of the "anti-life" [43] it creates.

As a corollary to the conception of art as the expression of impotence and ignorance, the characters created are distorted images of the traditional tragic hero. In fact, the new type of character is an anti-hero who parodies the traditional one by taking his central role but with the qualities of the marginal character in the traditional play. Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (which is heavily indebted to Beckett's Godot) is a concrete example of this exchange of roles: The two miserable servants become central in this play which parodies Shakespeare's Hamlet, and the story of the royal family becomes peripheral. Because of the many changes in

the form of the anti-play the new type of character is difficult to identify, especially in the case of Beckett. Goldman questions the validity of the term "character" in Beckett's Endgame: "Are they indeed characters as we understand the fictive personage -- possessed of traits of varying 'organization' or strength, changing with time and event, possessed of a will, character, temperement?" Goldman also rightly sees that Beckett "consumes characters"[44] to the degree that makes us teased to know how and by what tricks they are going to act. But how much can the author shrink his characters?

Beckett's approach is to make the "consumed character" retain elements of lifelikeness but at the minimum possibility. In Godot we can see Didi and Gogo as clowns and Pozzo and Lucky as messengers from society. In Endgame we meet members of the last family and their servant or son with caricatures of old age(Nagg and Nell). In Play the three speakers (after death) speak about sex and adultery. But in some plays the dehumanization is very sharp. In Breath, as has been said, we see no characters and in Not I we see only a mouth. In Quad the actors become robot-like figures with no identity at all and in the radio play Words and Music(1961) the actors are named: Words, Croak and Music.

Whenever the characters retain some link with humanity Beckett does not give them the chance to revolt against the standards of society such as Osborne gives his anti-hero Jimmy Porter, but depicts them in an intricate situation that is endless. They have a strange complicated personality that incorporates such opposites as madness and real sanity, endurance and complaining, power and weakness. Nevertheless, Beckett's character can also be a parody of the traditional tragic hero, because he hasn't got his knowledge, and he is not responsible for his destiny, yet he still retains an air of grandeur, like that of Hamm. The characters of Godot and Endgame are isolated even though they have company. The information they get from each other is limited. But they are not responsible for their ignorance and isolation. Moreover, they always suffer from physical or mental pain. Pain is congruent with life: Clov tells Hamm that Nagg is crying and Hamm comments, "Then he is living".(p.42)

The consuming of character and the non-referential and non-causal creation make the performance of Beckett's plays difficult. In fact, Beckett does not want actors in the professional sense. "Not for me these Grotowskis and Methods", he told Bair. "The best possible play is one in which there are no actors, only the text. I'm trying to find a way to write one."[45] He seems to have achieved this in

plays like Breath, Not I and Quad, for example. Bair gives an example from this type of no-actor play through Beckett's suggestion to Shivaun O'Casey to read extracts from From an Abandoned Work.[46] The performance becomes only a reading. Mallarme's dream of the one-actor play(the poet) is fulfilled in many of Beckett's plays. But, in a sense, the abolition of the role of the actor by imposing the text instead has become old-fashioned in later developments in anti-theatre in America. There, the text is subordinated to the reaction and participation of the audience and the creation of the text depends on a group work.

If the author is not omniscient and omnipresent, and if he is but a voice behind his characters to reveal human weakness, the language expressing these conditions becomes a broken, disconnected language. Like Wittgenstein, Beckett finds words unable to express the metaphysical side of life and so he exposes their limitations.

Beckett does not use ordinary language in his plays in order to cope with realism. The use of ordinary language is to depict the split in the personality of the individual and his difficulty in communicating with others because each one is busy in his own world. Estragon's remark, "Nothing to be done", at the beginning of Godot, after his failure to take off his shoes, is taken by Vladimir in a general sense:

"I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. All my life I've tried to put it from me, saying, Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't tried everything. And I resumed the struggle".[47] The inability of language to explain the condition of the characters is clear from the dialogues that lead to no change in his plays. The remark at the end of each of the two acts of Waiting for Godot, "They do not move", after the characters decide to move, is indicative of man's stasis. There is a missing thing, perhaps a metaphysical power that can validate and verify our stasis and give it expressible justification.

However, from an artistic point of view, the disconnection of language, the silences, and the comic phrases have their origin in the music-hall tradition. Peter Davison compares some of the exchanges in Waiting for Godot with famous music-hall performers, and then concludes: "No performance of Waiting for Godot (not a play obviously Brechtian, of course) has failed to keep me involved in the predicament of Vladimir and Estragon, even though an audience may(and should) be amused by the break in continuity".[48]

Beckett approvingly quotes Francesco de Sanctis' saying: "He who lacks the strength to destroy reality lacks the strength to create it".[49] In Beckett, this

double-edged process of destruction and creation takes the form of parody of existing art. Like the authors studied in Chapter One, Beckett exposes the realistic approach by mocking its elements. In Beckett's drama, the movement of traditional drama is replaced by inaction, the conclusive plot is replaced by circularity and story telling is almost abolished, the realistic setting is replaced by an empty stage with few paraphernalia, the narrative conversation is replaced by exchange of mental dialogue. In short, every theatrical element is reduced to its possible minimal utility. In such a parody of traditional drama, the use of the grotesque objects, the outlandish setting, the precise mise en scene and the use of theatrical language are worth consideration.

From the time King Ubu held the toilet brush as his sceptre, the search for unfamiliar objects in the theatre began: the breasts of Therese fly, the huge hand of God is stretched out on the stage to bleed, furniture proliferates until the tenant is suffocated by it, microphones speak from the walls to teach and subdue Kaspar, people wait for death in dustbins or receive orders to kill from a dumb waiter. Objects in Beckett's plays such as the dustbins, the pushchair, the stancher, the wooden dog, the whistle and the telescope remind us that these are the tools that we really need if we look at the depth of our condition.

With such an imagined world that parodies tradition, the reduction in movement, the minimal information and the abstract presentation demanded a new approach for production. The *mise en scene* becomes an important factor in achieving the expected shock on the audience. In addition to the introduction of the grotesque objects, the lighting, the precision in the timing of speech, the rare movements and the use of abstract settings for the plays to emphasize their theatricality are also mainly credited to the playwrights studied in Chapter One and to Beckett in particular(though of course Brecht's influence should not be ignored).

In the production of Beckett's plays the size of the stage is important. *Waiting for Godot* is more successfully produced in a small theatre which enables the actors to move on-stage and off-stage easily. *Endgame* is easier because of the few movements done by Clov, but the bulk of Beckett's plays depict inner states of mind and therefore are more suitable for television than for the stage. In television, the movement of the mouth in *Not I*, for example, is more impressive than it is on the stage. One notices a tendency in Beckett and Pinter to resort to short theatrical works which practically cannot stand alone in a theatrical programme. Both Beckett and Pinter, especially in their later works, seem to have an eye on that contact with wider

audiences which television makes possible.

Another aspect that makes the mise en scene important in the works of Beckett and many other anti-artists is the fact that the settings of their plays are not directly linked with reality. The time in Godot becomes the subject of the play. "Time has stopped", uttered by Vladimir, perhaps indicates the deadly routine of life if it has no explanation. What is the difference between yesterday, today and tomorrow if nothing changes? In Endgame Clov speaks of yesterday as "that bloody awful day, long ago, before this bloody day".(p. 32) Hamm considers the future but discovers that there is either the nothingness or the sharks and so he resorts to the pain-killer. To Hesla the death of Nell is the death of all sentimentalists who still remember the beautiful old days.[50]

Likewise, both the world and the stage -- the place of existence -- are subjected to abstraction. In Godot Estragon speaks about his life being in the mud, and Estragon tells his companion that he has puked his life away in the "Cackon country!"(p.62) -- "cackon is a pun on the French word for caca, a child's word for excrement".[51] In Endgame "the Flora!Pomona! Ceres!" turn out to be illusory and legendary, as the words themselves indicate. In Happy Days, the best of Beckett's plays that parody the change of

time and place in realistic drama, the mise en scene is very important: the bells, the bright lights, the handling of the things in the bag, the different utterances and pauses require great precision. The skill required from the actress who takes the role of Winnie depends on the timing of the utterances and on her coldness and indifference to her predicament. Even emotions are not allowed to work their way and are diverted to the opposite direction.

One more by-product of the anti-realistic tendency is the use of word-games. In a play without a story, like Waiting for Godot, for example, the actors play word-games to pass the time. Hayman writes:

> Waiting for Godot is a good example of the anti-art in which game-playing bulks large, partly because negative principles have asserted themselves so strongly. Since no serious activity can have worthwhile consequences, the artist is in the same position as the characters, who have nothing to do but while away the time with games. Game-playing also introduces the element of chance, and it is sometimes a premiss of anti-art that accident should supersede intention.[52]

In Endgame the actors play a number of games at the same time. They play at being actors and hence theatrical language is abundant in the play. One finds these expressions and terms: "me to play", "farce", "characters", "dialogue", "the whole thing is comical", "an aside", "soliloquy", "underplot", among others. Again as the title

of the play indicates, the actors are also playing a game of chess. In a game of chess every move done by the loser takes him closer to the checkmate position. Hamm is a loser but he continues the game because the next move is obligatory. The best position is to stop playing but this is, according to the rules of the game and the rules of performance, impossible. Hamm's game is, in this sense, a much more difficult one than the ones played by Vladimir and Estragon, because these two have some hope in chance, but he has not.

The confrontation with the audience discussed in Chapter One is also one of the theatrical methods used by Beckett, but he has polished it. In Godot, for example, Vladimir turns toward the audience and says: "that bog".(p.15) Before the end of Endgame Clov gazes at the audience for the first time in the play to speak about love and friendship which "They said to me ... all these dying of their wounds".(p. 51) Beckett also teases the audience indirectly by the contradictory and non-referential type of his creation.

Finally, in addition to the introduction of elements from other media such as the circus, the silent films, painting and music in Beckett's anti-play, the blending of melancholy with witty humour is characteristic of his art.

One is often at a loss whether to laugh or to show disgust at what is presented. For instance, Hamm in Endgame says:: "Can there be misery --- (he yawns) --- loftier than mine? No doubt ... My father?(pause.) My mother?(pause.) My ... dog? ... the bigger a man is, the fuller he is(pause. Gloomily.) And the emptier".(p. 12) The anti-climax ending at "the dog" is humorous and so is the contradiction of the last statement, especially after the pause, but even if the jokes pass through the wall of sadness the laugh would be tentative and cowardly made. However, Endgame is his most pessimistic play and in other plays like Krapp's Last Tape and Waiting for Godot there is more chance for laughter. Krapp's handling of the bananas, his difficulty in walking on and off the stage and his handling of the tape are remnants of the clownish acting of Didi and Gogo. The success of the image of the trousers in Godot has made Beckett repeat it in Endgame. The miserable situation of man, as seen by Beckett, is funny".Nothing is funnier than unhappiness", Nell says in Endgame; "Yes, yes", she asserts",it's the most comical thing in the world".(p.20)

It is clear from this study of Beckett's drama that it is deeply rooted in philosophy and that Beckett himself is profoundly committed to an anti-art spirit. Thematically, it is difficult to imitate his art, but the simplicity of his techniques is not difficult for a talented playwright

like Harold Pinter to benefit from. Pinter, as will be seen in Part Two, has benefited to a great degree from the artistic freedom Beckett and the rest of the anti-artists have created. Pinter, however, seems to have had only one eye on anti-theatre and the second has been concerned about the demands of Rattigan's "Aunt Edna". The theatre-goers whom Edna represents do not always need abstract and philosophical creation but search for entertainment even if it is only an illusion of reality. The general characteristics of the British Public theatre as represented by Noel Coward and Terence Rattigan are the subject of the next chapter.

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CHAPTER THREE

BRITISH POPULAR DRAMA: COWARD AND RATTIGAN

In their search for what is new, writers must of necessity consider previous creations, especially immediately preceding ones, in order to find ways of contrasting the new with the old. In other words the old is always present in one form or another. In her book Revolutions in Modern English Drama Katharine Worth has given a new shade of meaning to the so called "revolution" in contemporary British drama. "The revolutions of my title", she says, "are the Yeatsian kind, the turn of the wheel that brings up the past continually in new forms."[1] She does not deny that "the English theatre in 1972 looks as though it might be about to move out of the orbit of realism which has held it throughout the century and into another for which there is as yet no name",[2] but she argues that "the newness of the postwar and especially of post-1956 playwrights has been overstressed, [and] that much of this drama does not make a violent break with the realist tradition, as words like 'revolution' which have been used of it often suggest, but that it is, rather, a late --- and

possibly last -- flowering of that tradition."[3] To her this argument is especially evident in the works of Pinter. "Pinter", she says, "is the conjuror who comes into the realist tradition, takes over the well-worn material of the family play, the detective play and the cocktail comedy and works a dazzling transformation act with it."[4] This is the new critical approach to Pinter in which he is seen as wearing a new coat over his old clothes. After the initial shock of the novelty in his work had subsided, his strong leaning on tradition has begun to float to the surface. This may seem surprising. But for one of the masters of change in contemporary British drama to be deeply rooted in tradition is not entirely extraordinary, once the different intricate elements that exert their pressure on the British theatre are considered.

Public taste for the theatre moves forward and backward in clear cycles. What becomes old and out of fashion for a period of time becomes the focus of attention in a later period, especially if it has strong human and emotional elements. It requires a tradesman's intuition to know what the public wants at a particular time. The new and bizarre do not always conquer the emotions. The old fashioned may with the change of time re-establish itself within the fashion of the day.

> Dramatists like Coward and Rattigan, whose reputations were supposed to have been exploded for ever in the first gleefully iconoclastic phase of the theatrical revolution, very soon found themselves reinstated as modern classics and great precursors. And audiences' need for a balanced dramatic diet brings about constant slight shifts of taste, so that, for instance, in the mid-1960s audiences starved of sheer plot in the theatre(unless, horror of horrors, they were to stoop to The Mousetrap) began to turn towards revivals of recently despised playwrights like Maugham, Pinero and even Rattigan, in search of just that. If audiences felt it, dramatists felt it too, and so the later 1960s show a gradual re-establishment of story telling in the theatre...[5]

Pinter as a professional man of the theatre had "felt it" as early as 1958 after the first disastrous failure of The Birthday Party. His subsequent plays indulge more in family life and his characters begin to reveal more of themselves. It is not difficult for an experienced actor like Pinter to know the British taste and such knowledge has brought fortunes to Coward and Rattigan.

In the British theatre realism has been the landmark of a continuous tradition and at the same time a distinctive feature of the British taste. At a time when the dramatists in many European countries were experimenting with different aspects of symbolism, surrealism, absurdism and expressionism on the stage, the British dramatists were laying stress on the lives of their characters and on the slice-of-life and matter-of-fact creation. This does not

mean that there had been no place for experiment in the British theatre, but such experiments were much under the pressure to cope with the demands of realism. Chekhov, who was the exemplar for the British realists, himself extended realism far beyond the accurate depiction of everyday life. Yet the dramatists of the first half of this century could not achieve Chekhov's flexibility. Most of them could not liberate themselves from the matter-of-fact creation. They sought clarity and gave no chance for the situations to speak for themselves. However, there have been traces of the Chekhovian complicated realism in, for example, Joyce's Exiles -- a play that failed in 1926 but which was brought back to life by Pinter in 1971.[6] Coward and Rattigan, as we shall see in this chapter, do have some limited success in this respect. It is mainly through the works of playwrights such as Coward and Rattigan that the continuity of the realistic tradition has been conveyed to Pinter.

Coward and Rattigan represent the playwrights of the century who have tried to entertain their public through communicating personal images of contemporary moral changes and the emotional problems that have accompanied them. These images were imparted through comedy, especially with Coward, who is sometimes called the Farquhar of twentieth-century comedy. Rattigan shares Coward's fame as a comic playwright, but his best plays fall within more

serious categories. He is in such serious plays one of the best representatives of the English drama before the 1950s. As J.R. Taylor puts it, "...the main defence offered for British drama when it was compared (unfavourably of course) with what was being produced in America, France, and elsewhere was that really Rattigan had shown himself in The Browning Version and The Deep Blue Sea to be a major international dramatist and it was only native British modesty which prevented us from realizing the fact".[7] Rattigan has also become the spokesman of tradition and, though his reputation suffered because of this, his idea of the theatre as a place of entertainment through characterization still finds a respectable place in the works of a number of contemporary playwrights, among them Alan Ayckbourn, John Osborne and, as will be shown in Part Two, Harold Pinter.

One way of categorizing the drama of Coward and Rattigan is to put it under the banner of the drama of character. It is the type of drama in which the playwright tries to create characters similar to people in real life. Of course all drama -- except the most bizarre contemporary creations -- displays characters, but this is a convenient method to differentiate between the above type of drama and the other types: drama of ideas, the literary or poetic drama and the narrative drama (historical and detective).[8]

The playwright of the drama of character sees or imagines a human situation which he thinks it will be entertaining to display. "Entertainment", says Rattigan,

> is what moves you, whether to laughter or tears. King Lear is entertainment. The essential thing is that you care about what is going on every moment. This means that the writer is communicating with you. The communication must be there, but it does not have to be absolutely explicit. Hamlet isn't explicit. It is perfectly clear all the time what is happening, but not why. The central character is inconsistent because human nature is inconsistent.[9]

The drama of character, therefore, could be either comic or tragic and it could become tragicomic. In the following some of its characteristics are extracted, beginning with the cocktail or the drawing-room comedy, the comedy of Coward and Rattigan.

As a general rule British comedy of this century has been of the character-study type rather than farcical or clownish. The development of character leads to a comic situation which is mainly achieved through language. The Chekhovian method of revealing character indirectly through short scenes has been a favourite one. Rattigan and Coward, for instance, use it in French Without Tears (1936) and Blithe Spirit (1941) -- two box-office hits of the period. And like Chekhov's plays which depict the Russian middle class, these plays portray British middle class of this

century.

Coward and Rattigan did their best to depict the moral dilemmas of their time. Compared with Rattigan, Coward's plays display more freedom in character presentation, making his influence on Pinter more probable. However, in subject matter, and even in technique, Coward and Rattigan, with their differences, give a complementary picture of what works well, especially with the British audiences. These audiences want to see their weaknesses being exposed, shared by others and made fun of.

Juvenile and immature love is a topic for every generation. Rattigan made his first big success by exploiting this topic. In French Without Tears the young people of the play struggle to feed their love and sexual desires but not every thing desired can own own be realized. Diana, infatuated with her beauty, wants to make use of this beauty to the last moment until she finds her self secure with the man she chooses. She makes almost all the young men fall for her. Only Brian is seen as the practical one among them. He escapes Diana by borrowing money to pay for a prostitute. Alan, the one who is most aware of the situation, leads the others in their resistance, but he is the one to fall in the end. The problem of Diana and Alan is that they want to play with love instead of facing it.

The comic situation depends on the reversal of roles, with Diana chasing the young men instead of being chased by them. Such a situation, with a predatory and intimidating woman, can be seen in many of Rattigan's plays . It can also be seen in Coward's Design for Living(1937) and in Pinter's The Homecoming.

Another common comic type of woman is the dominating motherly figure who treats men as her possessions. Millie in Rattigan's The Browning Version and Florence and Judith in Coward's two often related plays, The Vortex (1924) and Hay Fever (1925), are examples of the middle-aged women who continue to have adventures with young men.

Family life and its complications is another theme that has an appeal to the public at large. The chief of these complications is that caused by the influence of a parent's unorthodox sexual life on his or her children. It is a common theme in Coward and Rattigan. Coward allows for a confrontation in an early play, The Vortex, between a mother and her son who becomes an opium addict because of his mother's relationships with young men, but in a following play, Hay Fever, Coward extends the loose and irresponsible attitude to all the members of family. Irresponsibility and looseness become the only alternative in the absence of authentic morality. Rattigan also treats the same problem

of the mother-son relationship but with him the ritualistic comic element gives way to practical demands. Michael in Love in Idleness (1944) plays the game of Hamlet when he returns from Canada to see his mother has fallen for Sir John Fletcher, but he discovers that he is inconsistent and that he really needs the wealth of Sir John.

Again the disloyalty between husband and wife is well exploited by the two playwrights. Husband and wife take infidelity for granted and live to play the game of hiding it. In Rattigan's Who is Sylvia (1950) the wife knows of her husband's search for his old love in duplicates of Sylvia but keeps her secret. Again, in The Browning Version the betrayal which is thought to be a secret turns out to be exposed right from the beginning. In Coward's Blithe Spirit the author makes Charles and his wives reveal their hidden sexual affairs but only after the death of the women. The one who betrays his partner imagines that his secret is quite unknown but at the end discovers that he or she has been living in an illusion and that the partner knows of the secret perhaps right from the beginning. Pinter uses the same plot in Betrayal. In fact his plays about the whore-wife contain many reminiscences of Coward and Rattigan.

The game playing in Coward's plays is far more ritualistic than that in Rattigan's. J.R.Taylor describes Coward's drawing-rooms as "nurseries".[10] His characters refuse to become adults and continue to play their childish games. Katharine Worth has noticed that in Coward's comedy the "characters are often supposed to be actors but even when they are not, his 'initiated' ones are always aware of themselves and amazed or amused that the uninitiated, the 'dull' ones don't recognize that they're taking part in a performance".[11] In Hay Fever the Blisses play at a quarrel between themselves until the four guests leave. Then every thing goes back to normal. In Design for Living the game is more complicated because Gilda, Leo and Otto play their games against each other. Worth has reminded us that "in the way he uses these acting elements in his characterization and in handling the ritualistic elements in social life, Coward anticipated an astonishing amount of present-day drama. There are striking connections with the drama of T.S.Eliot, Osborne and Pinter especially ... ".[12]

As a social group the choice of teachers, writers, artists, actors, playwrights is noticeable. These are the people with whom Coward and Rattigan have lived. "I write about people I know", Rattigan says, "just as, for instance, Wesker does. It would be very silly of me to try to write

about life in the East End."[13] This class of people provides material for the pompous literati type of comic figure: teachers and their pedantries, writers and their jargon and cliches, and in more general terms the banal exchanges of well-to-do people. The Blisses in Coward's Hay Fever, for example, invite their unsophisticated guests to play a game of proverbs. Again, the technical jargon of Madame Arcati is one of the best examples of how Coward makes use of the interests and way of life of the people he knew. She is a genuine comic figure. The pedantries and sophistication of middle class people also become the subject matter of some of Pinter's plays.

Certain technical conventions are common in the process of developing the characters. The action is built up for a stage with a proscenium and curtains. The separation between the actors and the audience, though it has lost favour in some contemporary experimental theatres, helps in concentrating the action, especially of what happens behind the scenes: the eavesdropping, the sudden entrance of an unexpected person and the quick changes behind the curtains.

Another traditional structural technique is the symmetric unfolding of the action. This is very noticeable in Coward's comedies. His procedure is to use several pairs of lovers in order to build up this comic symmetric

presentation. In Private Lives he employs two pairs, in Design for Living he uses one woman and three lovers, in Hay Fever there are four pairs and the partners are changed during the game played by the Blisses. In addition to their comic advantages, the symmetrical scenes prepare us for the changes in character. In Private Lives, for example, the first pair, Elyot and Sybil, come out to the balcony of their suite in the hotel to introduce themselves and to prepare for the appearance of the second pair, Victor and Amanda. The two pairs are linked, for Elyot and Amanda have been married before. The introduction is enough to explain the re-union of Elyot and Amanda and the embarrassment that follows. These structural devices make the flow from one peak of tension to another seem natural. Albert Hunt notices that "Coward, in Blithe Spirit, permutates in similar 'musical' way [to Pinter's The Collection], with ghosts: with a triangle... If, as some critics have claimed, the structure of Pinter's work gives the same kind of satisfaction that comes from the abstract structure of music, then there's a similar kind in Coward."[14]

In addition to these structural conventions of comedy, the language itself must be witty and moving. The exchanges in the dialogue are made in the best way to convey humour. Coward is very clever in making fun of the commonplace. The talk about drinks, food, the bicycle in Blithe Spirit is

very funny. Pauses and silences are used to give time for laughter. Misunderstanding, confusion and intermingled conversation are all used in Coward's Blithe Spirit. Charles can speak with Elvira, for example, but Ruth cannot hear her and the resulting misunderstanding leads to new confrontations between the husband and his wives.

Coward wrote a number of straight dramas but his fame rests mainly on his comedies. Rattigan, on the other hand, has written more serious and tragic plays. In modern drama tragedy is not always concomitant with death, it is in the misery of present life that death looks a better alternative. This is what The Browning Version (1948) and The Deep Blue Sea (1952) tell us. Rattigan's tragedies are not far from the spirit of the age. A quick look at Rattigan's dramatic theory and at some characteristics of his theatre may give a broader insight into the popular drama before the 1950s.

Like Ionesco, Rattigan can be considered a spokesman of his type of theatre. The theatre, he asserts, is a place of entertainment. He argues that "plays should be about people rather than ideas", because, to him, the theatre is an escape from the difficulties of life. He believes "that most people go there for amusement and relaxation, which, of course, includes mental stimulus, but always in terms of

character". [15] In another place Rattigan affirms that

> from Aeschylus to Tennessee Williams the only theatre that has ever mattered is the theatre of character and narrative... I don't think that ideas, per se, social, political, or moral, have a very important place in the theatre. They definitely take third place to character and narrative anyway".[16]

In his preface to Volume Two of his collected plays Rattigan created the imaginary figure of Aunt Edna -- the play-goer of any time. Through creating this figure Rattigan justifies his interest in the public taste. For him the relationship of the playwright with the audience should be a balanced one. "Although Aunt Edna must never be made a mock of, or bored, or befuddled", he wrote, "she must equally not be wooed, or pandered to, or cossetted."[17] He differentiates between the "good theatre" which aspires to please Aunt Edna and the "good drama" which resists the temptation to go all out for her applause".[18] The "good drama", as one can understand from Rattigan's plays is the one which follows the sequence of the well-made play. In fact, Arthur Houston, a member of the family of Rattigan's mother, had laid for him thw framework for his theatre. Houston says in his lecture "The English Drama: Its Past and Probable Future", which he wrote in 1863: "The highest type of dramatic composition is that which supplies us with studies of character, skilfully worked out, in a plot not

deficient in probability and by means of incidents not wanting in interest."[19]

Houston's definition seems to have survived to a great extent. With the exception of very recent experimental works, most British playwrights still give character study and well-developed action great importance. The present character study only differs from the past one in its level of complexity, which is, of course, related to the ever-increasing complexity of our time. This is clearly evident in the plays of Harold Pinter, whose characters are in many ways recent developments of the traditional character study. "I am interested primarily in people", Pinter once said, "I want to present living people to the audience, worthy of their interest primarily because they are, they exist, not because of any moral the author may draw from them".[20] Pinter's understanding of drama here coincides with Rattigan's . Aunt Edna would also welcome it as long as she can understand and recognize the characters created.

Rattigan, however, finds it difficult to accept the over-symbolic theatre of Samuel Beckett. When Beckett's Waiting for Godot was performed in London, Rattigan wrote an article entitled "The Arts and Entertainment: Aunt Edna Waits for Godot" and made Aunt Edna enjoy the evening but

not the play:

> How could I like the play, seeing that Mr Samuel Beckett plainly hates me so much that he's refused point blank to give me a play at all? [But, she says, Mr Beckett is making a big mistake to hate her:] If he didn't he might have written a very good play indeed.I suppose he's a highbrow but even a middlebrow like myself could have told him that a really good play had to be on two levels, an upper one, which I suppose you would call symbolical, and a lower one, which is based on story and character. By writing on the upper level alone, all Mr Beckett has done is to produce one of those things that 30 years ago we used to call Experimental Drama-You wouldn't remember that, of course, and that's a movement which led absolutely nowhere...[21]

Of course Rattigan has been proved wrong about Beckett's experimental drama, which has become an alternative art, yet his argument helps in understanding the disagreement between the traditional drama and the philosophic and abstract theatre of Beckett. Aunt Edna nowadays enjoys both types of theatre, although she might still argue that she would prefer the easier type of entertainment.

Rattigan's tragic figures are not out of date, as the playwright's once distorted public image might have implied. In fact, his tragic creations are in many ways similar to the creations of the present generation of playwrights. Rattigan depicts the miserable human being who suffers discomfort and humiliation because of his weakness or because of the circumstances surrounding him. Man himself is seen as deceptive, elusive, or unbalanced, overdemanding

and complex. It is true that Rattigan retains a slight beam of hope, but his hope is often dramatically imposed and artificial. What makes him look different from a contemporary playwright like Pinter, is his straight-forward dialogues, his lack of mystification and his frank exposition of motivation. Yet, one can argue in favour of his drama, when compared to the reduced creation of Pinter, that it has a stronger emotional, if not intellectual and social impact, on the audience.

Rattigan's casting of his characters in non-heroic, yet tragic situations makes some of his plays modern and appealing to the spirit of the age. The tragic situation in The Browning Version, for example, centres on a man who has been betrayed by life. He cannot cope with his wife's emotional needs and so the inequality in love has led her to betray him, even with his best friends. In his profession as a teacher, he does not show his real nature to the students, and that has made him feared and disliked. Moreover, a heart disease has added to his miseries and he has to leave the school before getting a pension. This man, Andrew Crocker-Harris turns his back on life and even the humiliating suggestion of the headmaster to forgo his farewell speech to a younger colleague does not move him. It is only the humble present from one of his students that gives him some beam of light, which is only temporary and

dramatic. He has to continue to live his life as cold as the food he mentions at the end of the play. Again, in The Deep Blue Sea, the idealistic and romantic view of love has led Hester to face the loneliness of life after she lost both her husband and her lover. Loneliness is also one of the major themes of Separate Tables. That play also depicts people who are afraid of exposing themselves, whose mental weakness has led them to abnormal behaviour. It is also very touching to watch the elderly ladies in the hotel while away their life watching other people who come to join them in their loneliness.

With the creation of unheroic tragic characters Rattigan has established himself as an example for many present-day playwrights.[22] Some of his tragedies can claim a unique position in contemporary British drama, as J. R. Taylor has observed:

> It seems that commercial and comic have to be synonymous: we are still waiting to see whether such a thing as a tragedy or even a strong drama can belong just as unmistakably to our own time and still achieve just as indisputable a broad-based popular success. Maybe Equus has done it: at any rate, it stands out as the only play of the 1970s which can put in a serious claim. But otherwise, funny can find the middle-brow public, while serious has to be either safely classic or dangerously contemporary. Perhaps the 1980s, and the changes they will inevitably bring in theatregoing tastes and habits, will also produce a playwright who can comfortably bridge the gap and produce that popular, modern, British tragedy that the world has supposedly been waiting for ever since The Deep Blue

Sea.[23]

Coward and Rattigan, as has been seen in this chapter, have given to the British theatre lively and successful plays that have entertained large audiences. They have been able, despite the temporary fall in their public standing, to produce their plays side by side with the new experiments. As a matter of fact, in certain cases, especially in the case of Pinter, they have been able to show an upper hand in the overall creation of the time. They have both expressed their admiration of Pinter. He in turn has acknowledged their tradition, and this satisfies them.[24]

Notes

1. (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1972), p. vii.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid. p. 86.

5. J.R. Taylor, "Art and Commerce", in C.W.E. Bigsby(ed.), Contemporary English Drama, "Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies, 19" (London: Edward Arnold, 1981), p. 181.

6. Katharine Worth considers Exiles more Chekhovian than any other play of the period and attributes its failure in 1926 to this fact: "It has taken so long for a Chekhovian mode of production and acting to establish itself in the English theatre...It is no accident that Exiles finally got the production it needs from Pinter". Revolution in Modern English Drama, p. 9.

7. J.R. Taylor, Anger and After (London: Methuen and Co Ltd, 1962), p. 20.

8. See Ernest Reynold, Modern English Drama (Westport, Connecticut: Green Wood Press, 1950), p. 160, who divides the English drama of the century into five categories as

above, the fifth being the Spectacle drama.

9. Stephen Watts, "Rattigan's Image", The New York Times, 10 November 1963, p. 26.

10. Cited in Benedict Nightingale, An Introduction to Fifty Modern British Plays (London and Sydney: Pan Books, 1982), p. 176.

11. Worth, p. 17.

12. Ibid. pp. 17-18.

13. Watts",Rattigan's Image".

14. Albert Hunt, "Pinter and Coward", New Society, Vol. 36, 24 June 1976, pp.696-7.

15. Daily Herald, 29 April 1949. Cited in Michael Darlow and Gillian Hodson, Terence Rattigan: The Man and His Work (London, Melbourne and New York: Quartet Books, 1979), pp.178-9.

16. The New Statesman and Nation, 14 march 1950. Cited in Darlow and Hodson, p. 182.

17. Cited in the introduction by E.R. Wood to The Browning Version and The Harlequinade (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980), p. vii.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid. p. 20.

20. Cited in Anger and After, p. 335.

21. New Statesman, 15 October 1955. Cited in Darlow and Hodson, pp. 237-8.

22. Alan Ayckbourn, for example, acknowledges his indebtedness to Rattigan. See Oleg Kerensky, The New British Drama: Fourteen Playwrights since Osborne and Pinter (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1977), p. 130.

23. Contemporary English Drama "Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies 19", pp. 187-8.

24. Coward publicly announced his admiration of Pinter, especially after The Caretaker; see Martin Esslin, Pinter: A Study of His Plays (London: Methuen, 1977), p. 24. Rattigan also saw the play and showed interest in its symbolic meaning; see Bernard Dukore, Harold Pinter (London and Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1982), p. 7. And Pinter himself has announced that he is "very traditional"; see Dukore, p. 116.

PART TWO

HAROLD PINTER: THEATRE AND ANTI-THEATRE

CHAPTER FOUR

EARLY PINTER: FROM THE ROOM TO OLD TIMES

Looking back at Harold Pinter's achievements since his first play The Room appeared in 1957 one notices that, in addition to the number of successful plays he has written, he has contributed (greatly to his credit) to the creation of a new theatrical mood among present day audiences. It is true that the change had already started before Pinter began to write his plays and that the air was full of the hubbub coming from the experiments of, for example, Beckett, Ionesco, Genet and Brecht, yet his own contribution has been remarkable. His ability to develop some of the new techniques within already known and accepted forms and his skill both to defend his new approach and to propagate it via the different media[1] has contributed a great deal to the change in the public attitude towards contemporary drama.

Significant though this achievement is, the connection which it implies between Pinter's drama and that of Beckett and Ionesco is often exaggerated. Pinter, as has been said before, is not a philosopher-playwright like Sartre, Beckett and, to a lesser extent, Ionesco, but is "a man of the theatre" who has sensed that a pluralistic approach on the stage that incorporates the real and the bizarre could work without the dangers of the too abstract approach of "anti-theatre". Many critics have noted the derivative nature of his drama. George Wellwarth, for example, after asserting that "nothing demonstrates more clearly that the avant-garde movement in the theatre is essentially a French movement than the work of Harold Pinter", adds that "the impression that Pinter's plays give is that of eclectic scholarship rather than creation"[2]. On the other hand, critics have also discovered affiliations between Pinter and such diverse playwrights as Anton Chekhov and T.S. Eliot. Moreover, as has been stated before, Pinter has benefited much from such exponents of the British well-made play as Noel Coward and Terence Rattigan.

The present writer accepts the argument that Pinter's work is an actor's-theatre[3] because Pinter seems, right from the beginning, to be exploiting his experience in

acting to build up dramatic situations out of very little given information and to be manipulating alert audiences and provoking reactions that extend outside theatre houses.

One can also feel how the writer's Jewish heritage has indirectly enriched his dramatic experiment. Arnold Wesker has complained that in his plays Pinter has "wilfully disguised what should have been a straight-forward fable about the Jewish community".[4] One can easily feel that Pinter is hiding something, especially in his early plays. Although he explains the obscurity of his plays as part of a literary vision of reality, his personal experience is probably the strongest factor in developing especially the negative aspects of his vision.

William Saroyan once said on a television programme that "dealing with the business of living, a playwright in and by his play will say 'yes' or 'no' or 'yes and no, you, the audience decide'".[5] Many of Pinter's plays tend to say "no", and that is one of the reasons why he is studied here under the rubric of "anti-theatre". As their subject matter, Pinter's plays treat the themes of identity, communication, morality, love, family relationships and remembrance, among others, from a negative point of view. Generally speaking, his characters have lost their freedom

either because of their weakness or because of the impact of other people on them. His vision is more often than not pessimistic, though he expresses it, like so many modern playwrights, in an amusing and comic manner.

This negative vision has often led Pinter to resort to unexpected reductionism and abstractionism: the normal observations about the characters and their environment is reduced to only disconnected, surface and on-stage moods which have no real connection with the off-stage world; language becomes non-referential; causality is denied its right course and resemblance to life gives way to the symbolic and the conceptual. Such elements create fantasy and pure theatricality that demand specific participation from the audience. Pinter extends the limits of realism to include both the illusion of reality and the playfulness of fantasy. It is, therefore, a new experiment that deserves continual evaluation and study.

After more than a quarter of a century has passed in the artistic life of this controversial dramatic figure the experiment he has started has had enough time both artistically and critically to mature, though, as is often the case with living authors, unexpected changes can happen at any time. Yet, of late, the writer's creative talent has

become costive. In the past five years Pinter has not written any full-length plays. He seems to be busy in other theatrical activities such as production and only the future can tell us about his next theatrical moves.

More has been written about Pinter than about any of his contemporaries.[6] In fact, the bulk of what has been written has led one of the critics to complain that "more rubbish has been written about Harold Pinter than all his contemporaries put together".[7] The "rubbish", according to this critic, has resulted from the commentators' enthusiasm to interpret the mysterious elements that often, by their nature, invite questions. "Such ... are the dangers of writing plays in which there is <u>something</u> concealing itself under <u>something</u>, if it's only a lot of fluff and dust blowing about and getting up critical noses".[8] To avoid indulging in the esoteric and the mysterious, I shall try to respond to Pinter's plays as works to be seen by audiences and not as academic experiments. Only a few of those interpretations will be cited when I feel that they support the general mood of the play. I aim to benefit from the amount of study done both by those who have favoured the author's approach and those who have disliked it, in order to arrive at a balanced assessment of his plays, especially

of those written in the past decade. These plays comprise: No Man's Land, Betrayal, the two sketches Monologue and Precisely, the short plays in Other Places and his latest short play, One For the Road.

Before beginning to study each of these plays individually, I shall begin by a general assessment of his theatrical experiment up to the year 1974, concentrating on four major plays: The Birthday Party, The Caretaker, The Homecoming, and Old Times, as representative plays of four stages in the development of Pinter's output.

- I -

Pinter's first three plays have brought a number of theatre conventions to question and have subsequently offered new conventions of their own. Like Beckett, Pinter has shaken the long established norm that the author should be omniscient and omnipresent in every thing he creates. For both Beckett and Pinter the author must not necessarily know everything about what he creates. But unlike the philosophic ignorance that Beckett preaches, Pinter claims a difficulty in verifying the truth about the motivation of his characters. By comparison, Vladimir and Estragon are innocent in their display of ignorance and impotence, while Rose, Stanley, Goldberg and McCann are not. Moreover, Beckett is more likely to share his characters' evasion and escapism when faced with the abstruse questions of life, while Pinter seems more likely to be in a position to help each of his characters to escape their personal exposure. That is why most audiences and critics did not easily accept Pinter's formula at the outset. But there has been a shift in opinion. People have begun to accept a play as it is without much questioning of the motivation of its characters, of its moral aim, or of the necessity of

unravelling its puzzles. I think that television with its indirect contact with audiences, has helped a great deal in creating such a negative mood. Nevertheless, the question of how much obfuscation one can expect the audience to tolerate on the real stage even after this shift in opinion is still valid. In Pinter's case, the noticeable return to the demands of tradition, as will be seen in the next stages of his career, supports this query. But there is no doubt that Pinter is among those who have introduced new limits to the realistic vein in some contemporary drama.

Pinter has also shown some traces of a 'reaction' against the audience. This is reminiscent of that of the anti-artists studied in Part One. In addition to keeping his audiences in the dark and to insulting them indirectly, as will be seen in the discussion of language games in The Birthday Party, he has shown a tendency to tease his audience even outside the theatre. This is clear in his answers to a lady who saw The Birthday Party and sent him the following questions:

> Dear Sir, I would be obliged if you would kindly explain to me the meaning of your play The Birthday Party. Those are the points which I do not understand: 1. Who are the two men? 2.Where did Stanley come from? 3. Were they all supposed to be normal? You will appreciate that without the answers to my questions I can't fully understand

your play.

His answers were:

> Dear Madam, I would be obliged if you would kindly explain to me the meaning of your letter. These are the points which I do not understand: 1. Who are you? 2. Where do you come from? 3. Are you supposed to be normal? You will appreciate that without the answers to my questions I can't fully understand your letter.[9]

More teasing is the search for the symbolic meaning of these plays. The room, the distinctive setting of these plays, has been compared to the womb image, the intruders are explained as the agents of society and death and so on ... but all these are the creations of the minds of the critics. They do not always fit.

One of the possible explanations of why his plays have taken their particular form is the playwright's own experience as a young Jew in East London during the Nazi period. We share the horror of the characters more if we imagine the room to be in a ghetto and some of the action to be a recreation of incidents in a concentration camp. A number of critics, most notable among them being Simon Trussler, William Baker and Stephen Ely Tabachnick, stress the Jewish influence on Pinter. Trussler, for example,

finds that "Pinter's own cultural inheritance of Jewishness, unlike Wesker's, can be sensed in the subtext rather than the subject matter of his plays, so that here an assimilated sense of persecution erupts in a seedy suburban microcosm".[10] To him both The Room and The Birthday Party are about guilt and retribution. He has an interesting explanation of the cause of enmity between Goldberg and McCann and their victim Stanley:

> The reversal of the racial stereotype --- the Aryan prisoner cowering in the concentration-camp spotlight, his Jewish warder ravishing the other's intended sexual partner --- is almost too obvious to need explicating. And Pinter does not spell it out as it's happening --- but he does anticipate it, in that brief, stark indictment of Stanley which comes between his nonsense-catechising at the hands of Goldberg and McCann and the birthday party proper:
>
> McCANN: Wake him up. Stick a needle in his eye.
>
> GOLDBERG: You're a plague, Webber. You're an overthrow.
>
> McCANN: You're what's left!
>
> GOLDBERG: But we've got the answer to you. We can sterilise you.
>
> McCANN: What about Drogheda?
>
> GOLDBERG: Your bite is dead. Only your pong is left.
>
> McCANN: you betrayed our land.

GOLDBERG: You betray our breed.

McCANN: Who are you, Webber?

GOLDBERG: What makes you think you exist?

McCANN: You're dead.

GOLDBERG: You're dead. You can't live, you can't think, you can't love. You're dead. You're a plague gone bad. There's no juice in you. You're nothing but an odour!

> After this, to talk about the play as if it were <u>merely</u> about a weak character overwhelmed by the forces of conformity[11] is surely not so much to over-simplify as to mislead. It is far truer to say that here the existential horror of existence is being probed until identity itself is effaced: yet this is to put the effect before the cause. For the cause, according to McCann the Irishman is nationalistic betrayal, whilst according to Goldberg the Jew it is racial impurity. The "dirty joke" has been turned against Stanley with a vengeance — and vengeance is its point.[12]

The understanding of Pinter's work as a reflection of his mixed cultural heritage reduces the reader's (or spectator's) confusion and the shocks his plays bring about are somewhat abated. The writer has not hidden his personal feeling for the room image, for example, and this, I think, has become clear to most of his admirers. Speaking with Kenneth Tynan about this image he concluded that "Obviously [people] are scared of what is outside the room. Outside the room there is a world bearing upon them which is frightening. I am sure it is frightening for you and me as

well".[13] Of course, this personal feeling, when shared with his admirers, gives to the plays deeper meanings. But at the same time the plays become less revolutionary in their opaque form. Moreover, the violence becomes natural and not as casual and unmotivated as it seems. At this stage of Pinter's career, one can see him, after the above consideration, creating traditional characters without exposing their true personality.

It is true that by knowing the causes of the creation of Pinter's early plays we can appreciate them better, yet whether we know these causes or not, we no doubt are moved by their dark depiction of existence. There is always the imminent danger that cannot be resisted. Many critics [14] have found Existentialism a dominating impulse in Pinter's drama. It is worth noting here that Pinter's images, especially in these early plays, approach existence at its negative extreme. Arthur Ganz has rightly noticed that "from ...The Room ... to ... Old Times, Pinter's plays have dealt with the malignant elements hidden in human life".[15] The violence in these plays is tinged with a cynical spirit that evokes the cruelty of Jarry's Ubu Roi. Bert attacks the negro Riley in The Room shouting "Liee!"(I, 126) and Goldberg and McCann in The Birthday Party amuse

themselves by downgrading Stanley's humanity by repeating the word "animal"(I, 94) at the end of a shower of abuse which they hail on him. In The Dumb Waiter Gus's worries are natural but instead of showing a real fatigue at his criminal profession, he only shows concern about "who clears up after "(I, 147) they leave their victim. One does not know whether to laugh at such a situation or not. They are Jarry's caricatures but in the clothes of real people. It is probably this debased image of humanity which has lead Alan Young to connect it with that of Dada and other French extremist movements. It might be true of early Pinter, but as he moves on to other aspects of what he feels to be a human problem the menace is abated, though he retains many of the artistic and moral reductions of his first three experimental plays.

The characters Pinter creates are to a certain extent original but their originality depends on contrasting states of being. On one level they are members of a specific society (Britain) and of a specific time(the present). On a second level they seem to be visitors from no-where. We have difficulty in identifying ourselves with them. Unlike Beckett, Pinter uses the traditional methods of characterization: his characters develop to a certain

extent and can be extrapolated. For instance, before the audience becomes involved in the menace that troubles Stanley it becomes acquainted with some aspects of his personality. Yet, because of the artistic reduction that is employed by the playwright, the essence of this personality is difficult to trace. Some critics have seen Pinter's characters as human-animals[16] and the writer himself "a zoologist".[17] Others have noticed that they are the human prototypes of perversion and mistrust. To Guido Almansi, for example, "The Pinterian hero lies as he breathes: consistently and uncompromisingly. Not to lie is as inconceivable to him as to 'eat a crocodile' or make love to a spider. Goldberg, Mick, Edward, Ben, Lenny, Spooner, are not just occasionally unreliable: they are untrustworthy by definition, since their words only bear witness to their capacity for speech, not to their past or present experience".[18] In his early plays Pinter seems to be more biased against the individual than Beckett. The blind man in Beckett's All That Fall, for example, seemingly kills a child, because of his own blindness, but Bert kills the negro in The Room for no apparent reason. It is difficult to imagine a society at peace if its members are like Stanley, McCann, Goldberg, Ben, Gus and Bert. In his book The Meaning of Freedom Philip Drew draws attention to the

dangers of the reductions to the positive elements of the individual in some modern art. He says:

> This paradox by which individualism conduces to its opposite is expressed also in structural terms: a work dealing with the individual in isolation may have one fully-realized character, as in Beckett, but by definition can have no more than one. When more characters are introduced their relationship is unsatisfactory, as in Adamov and Artaud and Albee, or incomprehensible, as in Jarry and Ionesco, issuing as violence in the first case and frustrated by total inability to make contact in the second. The choice is between the Theatre of Cruelty and the Theatre of Inertia, both, as far as the central character is concerned, branches of the Theatre of Bewilderment. If these in fact represent the logical terminus of individualism it is not surprising that the conclusion drawn from these works is that individualism issues in nothing and a more powerful social structure is called for.[19]

Pinter's plays contain aspects of both the theatre of Cruelty and of the theatre of Inertia, especially at this period of his career. The Inertia is clear in the lack of human warmth. In The Birthday Party, however, there is only a faint feeling of compassion revealed in Petey's attempt to face Goldberg and McCann, but the general mood is devoid of this compassion.

As subject matter, therefore, Pinter's first three plays incorporate some of the negations of anti-art. Pinter, like many of the anti-artists, has not "negated the negation" which has become very strong in modern thought and thus he does not seem to agree with Camus that man can take advantage of his loneliness and that "one must imagine Sisyphus happy".[20]

Another very important link with anti-theatre is clear in Pinter's use of language. Commentators have pointed to a number of similarities between Beckett's disconnected dialogues and those of Pinter. But because of the thematic differences that has been explained, the disconnection in Beckett is an escape from a dead end, whilst in Pinter it is part of a dramatic strategy. Esslin compares Pinter's dramatic language with that of Chekhov.[21] But here again, the"oblique" dialogue which Esslin discovers in Pinter can be related to the playwright's Jewishness. He has once described a type of dialogue he experienced in real life:

> Everyone encounters violence in one way or other. I did encounter it in quite an extreme form after the war, in the East End, when the Fascists were coming back to life in England. I got into quite a few fights down there. If you looked remotely like a Jew you might be in trouble. Also, I went to a Jewish club by an old railway arch, and there were quite a lot of people often waiting with broken milk bottles in a particular alley we used to

> walk through. There were one or two ways of getting out of it -- one way was a purely physical way, of course, but you couldn't do anything about the milk bottles -- we didn't have any milk bottles. The best way was to talk to them, you know, sort of "Are you all right ?" "Yes, I'm all right". "Well, that's all right then, isn't it?"[22]

Pinter's plays are alive with this type of dialogue. In The Birthday Party, for example, Stanley wants to leave the house but McCann is in the way. The two men are nervous and both of them hide this nervousness behind whistling "The Mountains of Morne"(I, 48). When physical contact seems inevitable with McCann, Stanley changes to a friendly tone:"So you're down here on holiday?"(I, 49). Sometimes the writer finds himself going too far in his oblique dialogues. In an early version of The Birthday Party the following dialogue between Lulu and Stanley occurs:

> STANLEY: Has Meg had many guests staying in this house besides me, I mean before me?
>
> LULU: Besides you?
>
> STANLEY (impatiently):Was she very busy, in the old days?
>
> LULU: Why should she be?
>
> STANLEY: What do you mean? This used to be a boarding house, didn't it?
>
> LULU: Did it?

STANLEY: Didn't it?

LULU: Did it?

STANLEY: Didn't ... oh, skip it.[23]

This passage implicates Lulu as an accomplice in what happens to Stanley and that is, perhaps, why it is omitted from the present edition of the play.

Although Pinter's word games add unnecessary and overwrought doubts about some of his characters, they are sometimes very dramatic. Words often take precedence over action in his plays. In The Birthday Party Pinter anticipated Peter Handke's language games. Stanley, like Kaspar, is subdued through language. The insults showered on Stanley and through him on the audience, that usually feels pity for his weakness, came ten years before Handke's speakers directly insulted the audience in Offending the Audience. Handke's reductionism and abstractionism are deeper but Pinter's insults are characteristically dramatic:

McCANN: You're in a rut.

GOLDBERG: You look anaemic.

McCANN: Rheumatic.

GOLDBERG: Myopic.

McCANN: Epileptic.

GOLDBERG: You're on the verge.

McCANN: You're a dead duck.

GOLDBERG: But we can save you.(I, 92)

Another theatrical technique that appears natural in Pinter's work and at the same time bears resemblance to anti-theatre is the symbolic use of objects. This is very clear in his very successful use of the food-lift in The Dumb Waiter. Though its symbolic image is weakened by its connection with the human name of "Wilson", it still conveys an image like that of the furniture which kills the new tenant in Ionesco's play The New Tenant. The strange food orders that came through the dumb waiter finally carry the death sentence on Gus. The drum in The Birthday Party is another effective device but the originality of the lift image is never surpassed in any of Pinter's other plays.

The above mentioned theme and theatre techniques which evoke anti-theatre are characteristically conveyed in firm traditional structures. There is linear progression of action in a conventional way. The introductory scenes present the main character or characters and complication develop into climax and anti-climax as in any traditional

play. The Birthday Party, for example, displays similarity of structure with T.S. Eliot's The Cocktail Party: in both plays the process of changing the personality takes place in the second act and the third act shows the results. Only The Dumb Waiter seems more structurally related to Beckett's plays. Like Vladimir and Estragon, Ben and Gus pass the time waiting for an order. The final scene of this play is similar to that of Endgame, with Gus standing at the door like Clov. Both endings are suggestive rather than conclusive. Again, the inarticulateness of Stanley at the end of The Birthday Party is similar to that of the orator at the end of Ionesco's The Chairs.

Pinter also employs some techniques that he has learned from his experience in acting. He is very fond of keeping the audience eager to know who is going to appear at the door and often shocks it out of its expectations. In Act One of The Birthday Party, while Stanley is playing on the emotions of Meg and terrifying her with the van and the wheelbarrow story, there is a knock at the door. Instead of the expected appearance of Goldberg and McCann, Lulu comes with the present(I, 34). Coward uses a similar coup de theatre in Blithe Spirit. The audience is told by Madame Arcati that they " might contact a poltergeist, which would

be extremely destructive and noisy",[24] but it turns out to be the lovely noise of Elvira, Charles first wife. Likewise, the theatrical technique of turning off the light is used in both plays.

Side by side with the anti-heroes of Pinter's plays, we meet comic and even farcical characters who are not unfamiliar to British theatre-goers. Mr Kidd in The Room has hearing difficulties and lapses of memory. He does not know whether his mother was a Jewess or not. This exploitation of old age for comic aims is very common. In Blithe Spirit, for example, the people at the seance session try to speak to the spirit of the dead old Mrs Plummett and when there is no response Ruth suggests that Madame Arcati should shout because the dead lady " was very deaf"(p.31). The nagging mother-wife figure of Meg in The Birthday Party is also common. She is like Florence and Judith Bliss in Coward's The Vortex and Hay Fever, respectively, and like Millie in Rattigan's The Browning Version. The sexual side of Meg's relationship with Stanley is not very clear but her effort to keep "my Stanley"(I, 65),as she calls him, is similar to the concern of Coward's and Rattigan's heroines for their young lovers. Moreover, Meg is distinctively British. The cornflakes and fried bread she prepares for

Stanley are meant to appeal to British audiences. Pinter remains in his plays within a British setting and the humour he employs is mainly within this context. Unlike Beckett's unidentified comic figures, Pinter's are British and mostly from London or its suburbs. He is, like Coward and Rattigan, a playwright of London and its people.

One comic figure employed in The Birthday Party seems an outsider. This is Goldberg. Pinter creates this character with great care. Being a Jew, Pinter seems to know him personally. His distinctive personality can be compared to those of the emissaries of T.S.Eliot's The Cocktail Party. He has a power to dominate people and change their personality that is similar to that of the Unidentified Guest. Goldberg, however, is not, unlike Sir Henry and Julia, an agent of a good spirit but an agent of evil. As a comic vice figure, with his rich variety of faces, his origin can be traced back to Iago in Shakespeare's Othello -- a play in which Pinter himself once played the role of Cassio.[25]

Pinter, as we can see from the plays he wrote in 1957 aims to entertain but has other motives at the same time. He seems trying to communicate certain personal moods behind the words and acts of his characters. In his next major

work he fuses his personal mood within a more human content. Theatre seems to come before anti-theatre in his first commercial success. The Caretaker.

-- II --

The Caretaker(1960) and the plays that were written in the same period, A Slight Ache(1959) and A Night Out(1960) and the revue sketches, represent a new development in Pinter's career. Psychological and social realism, which have been reduced to almost surface caricature in the 1957 plays, become central in this second group of plays. The discarded play The Hot House, written also in the same period (but not performed until 1980), is a clear indication of the mood the playwright has tried to communicate during that period. As the contents of this play reveal, the playwright has been aiming to dramatize mental cases. According to Esslin, The Hot House "is written in an idiom of grotesque farce which points in the direction of Ionesco", and the play "was discarded because the author knew that his future lay in the area of realism --- images of the real world which are raised to metaphors of the human condition by the mysteriousness inherent in reality itself

and the difficulties of drawing a line between the real, the imagined and the dream --- rather than in the direct distortion of grotesque fantasy".[26] Esslin is right in noticing Pinter's need to depend on realism but what he has failed to notice is that "mysteriousness" is not always "inherent in reality" and that it could appear artificial and overwrought depending on the mood the playwright wants to convey. The Caretaker, as we shall see, has, despite its greater realism, remnants of Pinter's own fantasy that was very sharp in The Birthday Party.

The theme of mental and emotional need is not a new one. Only six years before Pinter wrote The Caretaker and made a mental case one of its central characterss, Terence Rattigan had written Table Number Seven (the second play of his double-bill Separate Tables) about a similar case. In fact this play anticipates both The Caretaker and A Night Out. The image of the dominating mother and the mother-fixated daughter in Table Number Seven is similar to that of A Night Out except that in the latter the womb-fixation is attributed to an Albert instead of a Sibyl. Sibyl, again, is a female image of Aston. Like him she resorts to a downtrodden man and as in his case there is interference from a relative to prevent the new

relationship. There is, however, a big difference in vision between the two plays. Table Number Seven offers a remedy to the mental and emotional weaknesses of Sibyl and the Major, but The Caretaker suggests the uselessness of Aston's caring and love and exposes Davies's wickedness. In short, the first play says "yes", the second says "no". However this comparison is not intended to imply that Pinter had in mind Rattigan's play when he wrote his plays, but to refer to the same type of psychological realism as the source of inspiration for both playwrights.

Unlike the Birthday Party, the motivation of the characters is clear to a great extent in A Slight Ache, The Caretaker and A Night Out. In fact there is a gradual return to realism from one play to the next. In A Slight Ache the motivations are put in clues. Edward seems to be afraid of his physical decline and fears the mysterious intruder because of this decline. Flora recalls sexual experience with some poacher who raped her and who could be the match-seller himself. Yet her decision to keep the old man and send her husband out is unmotivated and not well-developed. It is one of the many instances where Pinter resorts to fantasy for merely theatrical reasons. In The Caretaker the motivation of each character is clear

except in the complicated case of Mick. Mick is, like Mrs Railton-Bell (Sibyl's mother), in a position to protect his brother but his harshness implies domination or perhaps exploitation instead of love. Aston gives money, shoes, and a place to live and a job to Davies, as Sibyl offers the Major her saving certificates when she finds him in trouble. Davies, however, is impulsive and he is a much more complex character than the Major. As we come to A Night Out the problem of motivation disappears totally. Albert, his mother, the silent Mr Ryan, Gidney all behave in reaction to known or potentially clear causes.

In these plays Pinter's drama is mostly evoked by the British tradition of realism. Unlike Beckett's plays and like the plays of Coward and Rattigan these plays display natural emotions. Yet in the emotions which Pinter depicts he seems to go to the negative extreme. The emotions Pinter endows his characters with take an amoral direction: Flora discards her husband and accepts the intruder; Albert might end up committing matricide, if one tries to go beyond the end of the play; love, charity and caring come only from the mentally sick, while those initiated in the world know the ingratitude of humanity and so have forgotten these values.

At this stage of Pinter's career he has tried to create a realistic atmosphere through language. In his book Six Dramatists in Search of a Language Andrew Kennedy agrees with Jean Vannier that Pinter's theatre is, like that of Ionesco and Beckett, a drama "of human relations at the level of language itself".[27] Yet to Kennedy "Pinter stands in sharp contrast to Beckett and Ionesco . Beckett ... has created his dialogue out of the stylised breakdown of hyper-literary styles. Pinter, to develop the image, has taken the linguistic Babel for granted(perhaps too glibly at times) at the level of everyday exchanges, talk, chat, verbal games -- with an ear for local usage, or rather abusage and verbiage".[28] These everyday exchanges are very clear in Pinter's work at this period. In his revue sketches Pinter has found how successfully one can make fun of everyday chat: the way people pass the time by gossip, talking about the weather or about food, as in "The Black and the White" and "That's All", for example. The Caretaker is distinguished by its display of the broken English which is spoken by Davies. Yet one feels, because of Davies's peculiarity, that his language has gone beyond control. Language comes closer to reality in A Night Out and in certain dialogues of A Slight Ache such as the talk about the wasp and the flowers. In A Night Out there is the

realistic language of the mother, the common conversations about food and sports and the cliches exchanged at the party. We still have the language games of The Birthday Party but Pinter here has introduced the technical terms of the speaker's profession as a means of dominance. Mick, in The Caretaker, is in the building business and so to put Davies at a level lower than his he exploits the language of business:

> I could turn this house into a penthouse[...] venetian blinds on the window, cork floor, cork tiles. You could have an off-white pile linen rug, a table in ... in afromosia teak veneer, sideboard with matt black drawers[...](II, 69)

When Pinter avoids fantasy, his dialogue become so realistic that it "provides samples for a work on the Varieties of Contemporary English".[29] Pinter's originality appears when he fuses fantasy with realism, but otherwise he is within the realistic vein of British popular drama. Compare the following dialogues from Rattigan's Table Number Seven and Pinter's A Night Out :

> MABEL(heard above the background) Were you the fricassee or the Cambridge steak?
>
> MISS MEACHAM. What? Oh, it doesn't matter. Both are uneatable.

MABEL. What about the cold chicken, then?

MISS MEACHAM. Cold chicken? We haven't had the hot yet.

MABEL. If I were you I'd have the fricassee. It's all right. It's rabbit.

MISS MEACHAM. The fricassee, then.

FOWLER. Any cheese, Mabel?

MABEL. No, cheese off.

FOWLER. Never any cheese. (p. 83)

SEELEY: Give us a cheese roll as well, will you?

KEDGE: Make it two.

SEELEY: Make it two.

BARMAN: Two cheese rolls.

SEELEY: What are these, sausages?

BARMAN: Best pork sausages.

SEELEY (to Kedge): You want a sausage?

KEDGE(Shuddering): No, thanks.

SEELEY: Yes, you're right.

BARMAN: Two cheese rolls. What about these sausages, you want them or don't you?

SEELEY: Just the rolls, mate. (I, 208)

Both dialogues point to the funny repetition of the food

routine.

Again, Pinter's understatements and his overcharged dramatic expressions are not unfamiliar in the British tradition. Aston's final statement "You make too much noise".(II, 86)could refer to Davies's talkative nature, to the noises that he makes during his sleep or most strongly to his betrayal. But similar very co sentences and jokes can be seen in Rattigan's play. In scene one of Table Number Seven, for example, the Major's need to talk drives Charles (who wants to study) to leave the lounge:

> MAJOR. ... Oh, I say! I hope we're not driving you away.
>
> CHARLES. No, that's quite all right. I can always concentrate much better in my room.
>
> MAJOR. But you've got the baby up there, haven't you?
>
> CHARLES. Yes, but it's a very quiet baby. It hasn't learnt to talk yet.(p.54)

The last sentence is a very compact joke on the Major's talkative nature and the comparison with the baby is very indicative. Again, Sibyl's unexpected disobedience to her mother when she wants her to leave the table is loaded with meaning. Her answer, "I haven't finished [dinner] yet", (p. 85) is a major change in her character and an evidence of

Rattigan's ability to use the subtext strategy. Sibyl's sentence, if compared to Flora's "Edward. Here is your tray", would seem more dramatic, but, on the other hand, it seems of equal strength with Aston's last sentence.

Davies's character is one of the richest in Pinter's output. With great professional skill Pinter has created a working class comic image that evokes Shaw 's Doolittle and at the same time has some of the characteristics of the abstract and symbolic creation of anti-theatre.

To Tom Driver, Davies "is drawn with such vividness, freshness and irony that he will easily stand up to comparison with Shaw's Doolittle or with Shakespeare's Owen Glendower".[31] Indeed Davies has some resemblance to Doolittle, especially in his language and his ability to invent stories to implore pity and kindness for himself and at same time to give a show of superiority:

> DAVIES(holding the tin). When he come at me tonight I told him. Didn't I? You heard me tell him, didn't you?
>
> ASTON. I saw him have a go at you.
>
> DAVIES. Go at me? You wouldn't grumble. The filthy skate, an old man like me, I've had dinner with the best.

.. .. ..

> I might have been on the road a few years but you can take it from me I'm clean. I keep myself up. That's why I left my wife... (II, 17-8).

Yet Davies is more than the "epitome of some of the worst traits of the British workman: prone to get involved in quarrels about who should do what job, xenophobic, lazy and ill tempered".[32] He is one of the characters that Pinter himself qualifies through another character, Mick, as "a wild animal". He is the epitome of degraded humanity:

> MICK. ... I can take nothing you say at face value. Every word you speak is open to any number of different interpretations. Most of what you say is lies. You're violent, you're erratic, you're just completely unpredictable. You're nothing else but a wild animal, when you come down to it. You're a barbarian. And to put the old tin lid on it, you stink from arse-hole to breakfast time ... (II, 82-3)

Davies has become one of the distinguished characters of contemporary British drama who represent humanity at its worst. He is one of the prototypes of modern anti-heroes. According to A. C. Ward in The Longman Companion to Twentieth Century Literature, anti-heroes reject

> standards of conduct or social behaviour formerly held to be essential in civilized society. Some deliberately revolt against those standards and regard the modern world as a jungle in which tooth and claw prevail; others are unaware of the existence of standards; others again, having been educated away from their early environment and become stranded intellectually and emotionally, turn sour and affect to despise what they cannot grasp; yet again others, such as Davies in The Caretaker, are inarticulate flotsams of humanity...[33]

Davies is not the intellectual type of a tramp. He is limited in his vision.

Many critics have attributed this limitation in vision to the source of Pinter's talent. To these critics The Caretaker is an exercise in drama writing. "The Caretaker, I am afraid", says John Simon, "is very much the work of an actor who relies on his knowledge of the externals of the theatre and his shallow awareness of contemporary trends in drama. For whereas the better experimental writers in today's theatre have mastered the use of language and symbol, Mr Pinter, a once and future thespian, though occasionally amusing and sometimes resourceful in thinking up effective things for his three brilliant actors to do, has no style, no ideas, no poetic fantasy with which to hold us".[34] Again, to Robert Brustein, if Pinter combines his gifts with "visionary power, beauty, heart and mind, then we

shall someday have a new dramatist and not _just an abstract technician of striking scenes for actors_".[35]

As an anti-hero Davies echoes Beckett's tramps but in his own negative extreme. Vladimir and Estragon are facing an intellectual impasse while Davies is creating a moral one. However, Pinter has tried to go beyond the moral problem by attaching to Davies an identity problem, but his attempt seems redundant after Beckett's Godot. What does his image of "Sidcup" --- Davies's salvation dream --- convey? Is it Davies's Jerusalem, as a number of critics have deduced? Even if it is, it does not mean much to the audience. Moreover, why does Mick break the Buddha? The question seems to have no answer. He simply breaks it for no reason. It is probably just another theatrical trick of suspense.

When Rattigan saw _The Caretaker_ he told Pinter that he knew what it meant: "It's about the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New,isn't it?" "No Terry,[replied Pinter] it's about a caretaker and two brothers".[36] If the play is no more than that, its message is nothing. To Driver, "Nothingness cannot laugh. For laughter you have to have being. So _The Caretaker_ does not begin in nihilism --- no play can be totally nihilistic ---

but that is where it ends".[37]

In addition to the anti-theatre traces revealed in the vision and the reversal of morality, the mise en scene of The Caretaker is conceived as a symbolic element, as in Ionesco. The junk and the disorder in the room seem to point to the chaos in the minds of the characters. The bucket with the water dripping from the roof is very impressive. The disorder in Pinter's play projects the character while the objects in Ionesco's plays depict man as a victim of this materialistic world.

The Caretaker refers to the problem of the racial groups in Britain. The fears Davies shows of the Indians, the Blacks, the Greeks and the Poles is a realistic treatment of a serious problem of which the author himself has had experience in his earlier days. It is one of the few cases where Pinter depicts a realistic social or national problem. However, the subject is given secondary attention, or so it seems, because the mental instability of Davies and Aston overshadows the problem and makes it only part of the comic material of the play.

- III -

With the exception of The Dwarfs(1960), the plays Pinter wrote after The Caretaker and until The Homecoming(1965) deal mainly with the subject of sex and its influence on the emotions, thinking and behaviour of the individual and on his relationship with other people. Unlike Beckett, Pinter here is mainly writing for a general public and not for an elite. Pinter puts his characters into situations that can be understood by any theatre-goer, although these situations are sometimes shocking and incredible, especially in The Homecoming. Because Pinter treats the subject of sexual relationships in a largely realistic way, he seems to continue the study of this ancient theme in an updated style. He imitates(sometimes to the point of travesty) the Comedy of Manners, following in the forsteps of playwrights like Coward and Rattigan. In Night School(1960), The Collection(1961), The Lover(1963), The Basement(1967), Tea Party(1965) and to a certain extent The Homecoming, Pinter evokes Noel Coward both in character study and in structure. In mood, however, Pinter approaches anti-theatre : the problems he creates have no solution and the ambiguity caused by the hidden motives of the

characters, especially in The Homecoming, makes it difficult for both the audiences and the critics to go beyond the physical reality enacted on the stage.

In many ways Pinter's characters are the descendants of Coward's. As has been said earlier, Coward has depicted the moral changes in his generation and has comically portrayed the spread of casual love. He has helped to create an atmosphere which made possible the frank exposition of this modern attitude. Taking the difference in attitude towards sex between the generation of Design For Living and that of The Homecoming, the relationship between Coward's characters and Pinter's reveals a continuity, an inheritance: the latter group is the kith and kin of the former .

After writing Night School, which takes a rather serious tone like that of A Night Out and evokes Rattigan especially in the behaviour of the elderly aunts, whose observations about the relationships of their nephew with Sally reminds us of the elderly ladies in Separate Tables, Pinter moves to another technique in the treatment of the subject of sex. He begins to explore the area of pretence and role-playing that had been dramatised before by Coward. In The Collection pairs of characters play emotional tricks on each other similar to those played by the Elisses in

Coward's Hay Fever. Stella plays against her husband James and Bill plays against his male lover Harry. James returns the ball to Stella's court by showing interest in Bill. Harry finally plays a deus ex machina role in an attempt to bring back the situation to where it has started. However, The implication of Pinter's play is deeper than Coward's: while the Blisses can return to normal life because they are playing to an audience represented by the guests, the two pairs in The Collection are playing for themselves alone. They are the actors and the audience at the same time and the central question of the game remains unsolved. In The Lover Pinter reduces the role-playing still further and makes it played by only one pair. In Tea Party there is a variety in the game but it tends to be sinister. Finally, in The Homecoming the game becomes evil and it involves a whole family.

The games played in Pinter's plays reveal character, and in this too he more closely resembles Coward than Beckett. They show that these characters are obsessed by sex and its emotional consequences. Unlike Beckett's characters, who play games to pass the time, Pinter's characters play games to expose each other, and in this way we know more about them.

The rivalry of the males and their fights to possess the female is a common theme in Coward, Rattigan and Pinter. In The Basement there is a trio that is in many respects enacting the same shifts in possession as that of Coward's trio in Design for Living. Law and Stott are close friends and share the same woman (Jane), as Leo and Otto share the love of Gilda. But being a Pinterian character and a more modern female, Jane has no need to explain her role in the game. She just starts her adventure with Stott and ends it with his friend Law. The ending implies a circular plot and the game might start again, as in the case of Gilda, who shifts between Leo and Otto. But because Pinter is only interested in depicting the unorthodox aspects of relationships, he does not include an equal to Ernest. There is no catharsis for the emotional problem in Pinter's plays.

In the dramatization of the man-woman relationship Coward anticipates Pinter in the animal image of this relationship. Gilda, for example, playfully speaks of herself as "just a pack of animal grab",[38] and "a cruel little cat"(p. 21). But the animal image becomes deeper in Pinter's plays. In The Basement, for example, Pinter makes Law and Jane sniff each other "like animals"(III, 167).

When the two men fight for Jane with broken bottles she watches them with indifference, pouring milk and coffee(III, 170). Like a female animal she knows she is the prize of the winner. This animal image persists in this period of Pinter's career and in The Homecoming, as will be seen, it reaches its apex.

Pinter's plays of this period also display structural similarities with Coward's. The unfolding of action in Pinter's plays often depends on parallelism and symmetry. In The Collection, for example, we have two pairs contrasted. Like the two pairs in Private Lives the action is revealed by the change from one pair to the other and through the exchange in partners. Pinter avoids too much repetition of the discussion of the same topic by different pairs as in Coward's play but like him he sometimes uses repetition for dramatic effect. Stella, for instance, tells Harry that James has just "not been well lately, actually ... overwork"(II, 148), and in his turn James tells Harry and Bill that his wife has "not been very well lately, actually. Overwork"(II, 155). This repetition is as comic as those employed by Coward and Rattigan, and at the same time it adds to the mystery of the situation.

Another structural similarity with Coward can be seen at the end of Act I of The Homecoming. Pinter ends this act with an emotional -- or perhaps seemingly so -- cuddle between Max and his son. In Coward's Design for Living two scenes end with emotional situations and in one of them, Act II, Scene 3, Leo and Otto "both sob helplessly on each other's shoulders as the curtain slowly falls"(p. 92).

Pinter successfully employs shifts of scene in The Basement, which was first written for television. These match the shift in the possession of the girl by the two males. This technique has been used in Design for Living, where the action takes place in three different cities, Paris, London and New York, which correspond to the presence of Gilda with one of the three rivals .

Even in dialogue -- Pinter's best achievement -- one can find some similarity between him and Coward. The two playwrights sometimes make their characters resort to absurdity. Near the end of Design for Living Leo and Otto want Gilda's visitors to leave the house and so they start to talk nonsense:

LEO: You've been to Chuquicamata, I suppose?

HENRY: Where?

LEO: Chuquicamata. It's a copper mine in Chile.

HENRY: No, we haven't. Why?

LEO: (Loftily): It doesn't matter. It's most unimportant.

HENRY: Why do you ask?

LEO: Please don't say any more about it -it's perfectly all right.

HENRY (with irritation): What are you talking about?

LEO: Chuquicamata.

OTTO (gently): A copper mine in Chile.

HELEN (to relieve the tension): It's a very funny name. She giggles nervously.

LEO (coldly): Do you think so?

HELEN (persevering): Is it -- is it an interesting place?

LEO: I really don't remember; I haven't been there since I was two.

OTTO: I've never been there at all.(p. 101)

Bill and James in The Collection use a similar technique. Bill wants James to leave the house but the latter wants to question him. When cornered Bill begins a tedious and pompous talk:

BILL: I'm expecting guests in any minute, you know. Cocktails, I'm standing for Parliament next season.

JAMES: Come here.

BILL: I'm going to be Minister for Home Affairs. (II, 131)

Again when James himself is cornered, he changes the subject:

JAMES: You're a wag, aren't you? I never thought you'd be such a wag. You've really got a sense of fun. You know what I'd call you?

BILL: What?

JAMES: A wag.

...

JAMES: I bet you are a wow really.

...

BILL: No, I'm not much of a wow at parties. The bloke I share this house with is, though.

JAMES: Oh, I met him. Looked a jolly kind of chap.

BILL: Yes, he's very good at parties. Bit of a conjuror.

JAMES: What, rabbits?

BILL: Well, not so much rabbits, no.

JAMES: No rabbits?

BILL: No. He doesn't like rabbits, actually. They give him hay fever. (II, 133-134)

(Notice how Pinter uses the name of Coward's play Hay Fever

unconsciously. Dialogues such as the above are not very different from the role-playing exchanges of Coward's play.)[39]

Before speaking about the traditional and the experimental in The Homecoming, a point about Pinter's shift to a relatively wider depiction of reality ought to be delineated. Pinter, as has been noticed, after The Birthday Party has begun to enter the minds of his characters cautiously and with meticulously calculated steps. He could not allow himself to go deep in the world of causality because he has already denounced them both in theory and in practice. To extricate himself from this situation, I presume, Pinter has chosen to apply a phenomenological study of human behaviour and capability. Instead of studying these phenomena outside society as in Beckett, Pinter studies them at the edges of society, where characters become "scums", animal-like or total aliens. Nevertheless Pinter follows Beckett in showing human weakness through exposing the faults and limitations of the different phenomena that control our existence, such as mental weakness (madness) and the uncontrollable sexual impulse. (In the next stage, as will be shown, he will move on to study the limitations of memory and the split in

personality).

Whether Pinter's realism becomes "subjective" or "objective", as one critic [40] has categorized it, it does not aim at a comprehensive vision of life. His plays do not involve the intricate elements that the human being tries to adjust himself to, as in the plays of Ibsen and Chekhov, for instance. Nor do they have the social indictment of Brecht's plays. At their hidden depth one can find traces of the perversion created by writers like Jarry, Maeterlinck, Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Genet, although, as has been seen, it also has many meeting points with the British tradition. Pinter's obsession with the negative image of art had developed in him even before he started playwriting. In Beckett at Sixty Pinter quotes himself from a letter written to a friend in 1954 explaining why he is fascinated by Beckett.

> I don't want philosophies, tracts, dogmas, creeds, ways out, truths, answers, nothing from the bargain basement. He is the most courageous, remorseless writer going and the more he grinds my nose in the shit the more I am grateful to him. He's not fucking me about, he's not leading me up any garden, he's not slipping me any wink, he's not flogging me up a remedy or a path or a revelation or a basinful of bread crumbs, he's not selling me anything I don't want to buy, he doesn't give a bollock whether I buy or not, he hasn't got his hand over his heart [...] He brings forth a body of beauty. His work is beautiful. [41]

The Homecoming is more objective in its description of realism, as Taylor has rightly observed[42]: the writer goes back to the type of surface realism of The Birthday Party, where the real identity and motives of the characters are obscured. Yet one can make a distinction here between the one female in the play and the rest of the family. In creating Ruth, Pinter tends to probe more at the subjective. He hints at her past and makes her face her predicament with straightforward professionalism. She is a less controversial character than her husband Teddy and the rest of the family. Pinter creates Ruth from the image of the previous sex symbols on the British stage and creates the rest of the family from his own personal imagination. In creating such a family Pinter's objectivity is so savage that its members seem to come from nowhere.

Like Jane in The Basement, Ruth, in many respects, has common ground with Coward's Gilda. The latter has explicitly directed attention to the internal movement within her body that determines her behaviour: "Everything is glandular. I read a book about it the other day. ... All the hormones in my blood are working overtime. They are rushing madly in and out of my organs like messenger boys"(pp. 7-8). Ins her relation with her men she accepts

the Darwinian explanation for the struggle in life: "The survival of the fittest — that's what counts"(p. 59). In The Homecoming Ruth includes the functions of her organs in a philosophic discussion. The way it conveys it is subtler than Gilda's but the message is the same:

> Look at me. I ... move my leg. That's all it is. But I wear ... underwear ... which moves with me ... it ... captures your attention. Perhaps you misinterpret [...] My lips move. Why don't you restrict ... your observations to that? Perhaps the fact that they move is more significant ... than the words which come through them.(III, 68-9)

Ruth's acceptance of the family's proposal is an acceptance of Gilda's tip that "survival is for the fittest". There is clear evidence in the play that Ruth considers the family stronger than she. She has shown her reluctance to enter the house at the beginning of the play but her husband has not heeded her wish. Finding herself face to face with the family she tries to make use as much as she can of her part in the homecoming. Ruth's homecoming is much more complicated than Gilda's — but the latter has the precedence. In Design for Living there is more than one homecoming — or "super homecoming"(p. 18) as Otto puts it — and in the last one the husband, Ernest Friedman, loses his wife. Friedman is left "in a frenzy"(p. 123)but Teddy "shakes hands" with those who have usurped his wife and

leaves the house on friendly terms. The game has run wild.

Pinter goes back to reductionism in his creation of the family in The Homecoming. Here, as in the early plays, we meet real people: a butcher, a taxi-driver, a university professor, a pimp, a boxer and a housewife who previously worked as a model. They quarrel and abuse each other like any other family of similar standards, but as the action unfolds they become unbelievable. They receive their long absent son and his wife in a very bizarre and savage manner without any clear reason. The Homecoming, therefore, touches on anti-theatre in its non-referential approach and in the language that communicates it.

Like all anti-theatre The Homecoming creates a situation that is difficult to find a solution to from the given elements in the play. Why does Teddy's family receive him and his wife in such an unusual way? The answer to this can be guessed in the same way as we guess who Godot is. We can prefer one of the interpretations but the final truth remains hidden deep in the mind of the author.

Looked at from a British point of view, the family depicted in The Homecoming is the main cause behind the uniqueness of the play. "The importance of the family",

says Taylor, "the tribe, of preserving continuity and hierarchy within the cohesive repeating pattern of family life, does seem foreign to British drama in general".[43] Pinter, as has been said before, denies that he is writing Jewish plays but again, here, he seems to be overpowered by his own upbringing. Once we include some elements of Pinter's life and religious heritage, the play becomes more realistic, as is the case with The Room and The Birthday Party. Esslin's explanation of the play as a modern incarnation of an oedipus complex[44] and Kerr's stress that Ruth is "the existential suppleness of the play"[45], and Wardle's suggestion that the play is an "animal metaphor"[46] -- all ignore clear Jewish aspects of the play. In a passage that has been dropped from the film version Max tells Teddy, as Joey "lies heavily on Ruth"and Teddy stands with Ruth's coat:

> Listen, you think I don't know why you didn't tell me you were married? I know why. You were ashamed. You thought I'd be annoyed because you married a woman beneath you. You should have known me better. I'm broadminded. I'm a broadminded man.(III, 75)

From a religious point of view marriage with a gentile is unacceptable and that is why the family receives its daughter in law with hostility. A number of critics find

that the play has realistic echoes from Pinter's life. Gale tells that "the plot is simple, inspired by a boyhood friend of Pinter's from Hackney who went to Canada to teach and got secretly married before returning home to surprise his family".[47] Baker and Tabachnick refer to a friend of Pinter's named Barry Supple, who finds that in The Homecoming "Pinter distorts... his themes by the fantastic projection of a 'rational' action and by a presumably conscious attempt to provide universal significance through the suppression of any explicit reference to the family's Jewishness".[48] The names of the characters, according to Supple, are either of Biblical derivation(Max, Sam and Lenny) or Jewish names adopted by Jews in Europe(Joey, Teddy and Jessie). Ruth is the name of King David's non-Jewish Moabite mistress. According to Supple, therefore, The Homecoming "is essentially a play about intermarriage... the interaction between the family and the gentile intruder, the basic clash of social facts and sexual tension, create a framework with which the play's otherwise nightmarish ending assumes at least the semblance of meaning".[49] Again, according to Charles Spencer "The Homecoming is even more specific --- the introduction into the family of an alien --- "prostitute", she is called by the father --- shiksa [gentile woman] would be a more localised description". To

Spencer the theme of the play is "close to the author's experience, since he married a non-Jew, before fame and success, and no doubt had to face typical Jewish reaction".[50]

The indirect reference to the problem of the Jewish family, therefore, is the cause of the unconscious anti-theatre reduction in character study and in making the dialogues of some characters look like "ready-made" utterances. To accept the play is to forget about the "becauses" of traditional drama and to look at the play as an object of its own. The play, as such, is negative in its metaphor. As with the "anti-society" equation put by Genet in his play The Balcony, in which he makes society equal to a brothel, Pinter has created an "anti-family" image, though it is perhaps darker than Genet's image. The family house, the miniature of a society, has become a brothel in Pinter's play. Not only this, but Pinter makes the head of the family extend the queer family ritual to an international level.

> LENNY. You could be our representative in the States.
>
> MAX. Of course. We're talking in international terms! by the time we've finished Pan-American'll give us discount.(III, 90)

The Homecoming, then, is another example from Pinter's work where mystification has hindered the art from going beyond the technical level to the level of philosophy and a vision of life. Harold Hobson, one of his great admirers, has noticed this limitation in the vision of the play.

> In its accurate completion this is an artistic achievement of a high order; and Mr Pinter writes with superb and startling rhetoric. But I am troubled by the complete absence from the play of any moral comment whatsoever. To make such a comment does not necessitate an author's being conventional or religious; it does necessitate, however, his having made up his mind about life, his having come to some decision. At the end of Inadmissible Evidence we not only know what happened to Bill Maitland; we also know what John Osborne thinks about him. They have no relation to life outside themselves. But we have no idea what Mr Pinter thinks about Ruth or Teddy, or what value their existence has. They live: their universe lives: but not the universe. If they have a connection with it we are not shown what it is.[51]

Again, Simon Trussler makes another comparison which gives us some idea about the difference between the negative spirit of anti-theatre and the search for an alternative in committed theatre.

> To suspend disbelief in this play is to call a temporary halt to one's humanity... If a work is pornographic because it toys with the most easily manipulated human emotions — those of sex and (more especially) violence — without pausing to relate causes and effect, then The Homecoming can even be said to fall into such a category. One has only to think of such a roughly contemporary work as Edward Bond's Saved to realise that what may be

> pornographically objectionable depends not on the number of blows struck, curses cursed or girls propositioned per page --- because for Bond's characters even at their most callous one can feel compassion, and sense human causality.[52]

The dialogues of the play are the best example of Pinter's parody of naturalistic situations by using what Trussler has rightly called "ready-made" exchanges. In fact, there are many instances in the play in which the dialogue is natural but tends to be like pieces cut from newspapers. Among these instances are the two stories about violence and sex that Lenny relates to Ruth when they first meet, and the reactions of Joey to the behaviour of Ruth. One clear example of the ready-made exchange takes place after Sam collapses. Here the members of the family, even Teddy seem to be characters in a Beckettian Endgame:

> MAX. What's he done? Dropped dead?
> LENNY. Yes.
> MAX. A corpse? A corpse on my floor? Get him out of here! Clear him out of here!
> JOEY bends over Sam.
> JOEY. He's not dead.
> LENNY. He probably was dead, for about thirty seconds.
> MAX. He's not even dead!
> [...]
> Teddy stands. He looks down at Sam.
> TEDDY. I was going to ask him to drive me to London Airport.(III, 94-5)

When a play contains such dialogue and exchanges the actors will find it difficult to adjust themselves to a perverted type of emotion. Here his actors must do what actors have to do in a Beckett play: act without showing real emotions. But while the poker face in Beckett is used to enact a universal human situation, the poker face in Pinter is used to reveal the evil in man.

Being a non-referential work and at the same time an actable play, The Homecoming is clear evidence of Pinter's mastery of the techniques of the profession. The play employs shocks, one after the other, until they come to a climax. The shocks are interspersed with great variety in the action: there is violence, seduction, fornication, insults, story telling, black humour and even some real emotions, as in Sam's case. After The Homecoming the shocks and variety in action will be reduced by Pinter. He had already tried his hand in this period at writing for a static theatre when he wrote The Dwarfs, and then after The Homecoming he began to develop this type of drama in Landscape, Silence and Old Times, which form a new development in Pinter's career. Before these plays are dealt with, a word about his first anti-theatrical play The Dwarfs.

The Dwarfs is the first clear example of Pinter's tendency to have recourse to reductionism and abstractionism and to minimize the theatrical elements in the Beckettian manner. In all the plays discussed so far, there is only an exhibition of the limitation in the artistic process of depicting the real world and the real identity and motives of people. But in The Dwarfs it is difficult to grasp even a surface reality about the characters and their environment. Action is reduced to a number of interrupted dialogues and monologues, without a clear-cut plot. Moreover, these dialogues and monologues impart abstract ideas like the concept of identity, the continual flux of personality, the obsession of the mind with the supernatural powers symbolised by the dwarfs and the fear of destruction, extinction and death. The development of character seems for the first time less important than the ideas communicated.

Yet, as in The Homecoming, in The Dwarfs the vision is muddled between the personal and the universal. In its original genesis, The Dwarfs is a partially autobiographical novel written by Pinter between 1950 and 1957. The unpublished novel as outlined by Esslin[53] is explicit and has all the necessary elements of a narrative. The trio in

the play is in the novel involved in socia activities and there is a female that causes some of the enmity between the friends. In the play all this has been removed and what remains is only equal to a skeleton without much flesh on it. Anti-theatre in this play is not original as a creation but depends on a previous work. This is perhaps the weakness of the play. It is very elliptic, very esoteric and very personal. Pinter has noticed this weakness about the play: "From my point of view, the general delirium and states of mind and reactions and relationships in the play -- although terribly sparse -- are clear to me. I know all the things that aren't said, and the way the characters actually look at each other, and what they mean by looking at each other".[54] The audience, however, do not know what Pinter knows. Drama here has approached the individuality of poetry.

Like the plays of Beckett, Ionesco, and Handke, The Dwarfs throws light on the problem of identity that has become symptomatic of the confusion of the age. Len lays down to mark his doubts about the essence of the human identity:

> The point is who are you? Not why or how, not even what. I can see what, perhaps, clearly enough. But who are you? It's no use saying you know who you are just because you tell me you can fit your

> particular key into a particular slot, which will only receive your particular key because that's not foolproof and certainly not conclusive. Just because you're inclined to make these statements of faith has nothing to do with me. It's not my business. Occasionally I believe I perceive a little of what you are but that's pure accident. Pure accident on both our parts, the perceived and the perceiver. It's nothing like an accident, it's deliberate, it's joint pretence. We depend on these accidents, on these contrived accidents, to continue. It's not important then that it's conspiracy or hallucination. What you are, or appear to be to me, or appear to be to you, changes so quickly, so horrifyingly, I certainly can't keep up with it and I'm damn sure you can't either. But who you are I can't even begin to recognise, and sometimes I recognise it so wholly, so forcibly, I can't look, and how can I be certain of what I see? You have no number. Where am I to look, where am I to look, what is there to locate, so as to have some surety, to have some rest from this whole bloody racket? You're the sum of so many reflections. How many reflections? Whose reflections? Is that what you consist of? What scum does the tide leave? What happens to the scum? When does it happen? I've seen what happens. But I can't speak when I see it. I can only point a finger. I can't even do that. The scum is broken and sucked back. I don't see when, what do I see, what have I seen? What have I seen, the scum or the essence? Does all this give you the right to stand there and tell me you know who you are?...(II, 111-12)

But this important image of the relativity of knowledge and the flux of personality is confused by what precedes and follows it. Len has already shown some envy of Mark because, as he says, Mark has got roots: "Why haven't I got roots? My house is older than yours. My family lived here. Why haven't I got a home?"(II, 111) And at the end of the

long speech, Len is actually employing the identity question to slander Pete: "He thinks you're a fool. Pete thinks you're a fool"(II, 112).

Pete's dream, in which he describes panic in a tunnel and a girl whose "face was coming off in slabs too, like plasters. Black scabs and stains. The skin was dropping off like lumps of cat's meat"(II, 101-102), and Len's last monologue, where he speaks of everything "packed" and "piled", and the contrasting image he gives of the "yard as I know it is littered with scrapes of cat's meat, pig bollocks, tin cans, bird brains, spare parts of all the little animals, a squelching, squealing carpet, all the dwarfs' leavings spittled in the muck, worms stuck in the poisoned shit heaps, the alleys a whirlpool of piss, slime, blood, and fruit juice"(II, 117), produce an effect of an end of the world similar to Beckett's Endgame. The last few sentences of the play -- "All is clean. All is scrubbed. There is a lawn. There is a shrub. There is a flower." -- echo Clov's wish for death in the image of order and tidiness.

The style of this short play brings to mind a number of similarities with the styles of a number of contemporary writers. The first long passage quoted from the play reminds us of T. S. Eliot's unidentified guest in The Cocktail Party, where he notices that "what we know of the other people is only our memory of the moments/ During which we know them". [55] At the end of the same passage the quick staccato of monosyllabic words reminds us of Beckett's monologues. Again Pinter echoes Beckett in the use of non sequiturs, as when Len tries to pull Mark's leg in a religious talk:

LEN. Do you believe in God?
MARK. What?
LEN. Do you believe in God?
MARK. Who?
LEN. God.
MARK. God?
LEN. Do you believe in God?
MARK. Do I believe in God?
LEN. Yes.
MARK. Would you say that again? (II, 111)

Pinter also uses a style similar to Handke's in the play: he starts with a sentence and modifies it in different ways:

LIN. This is a funny toasting fork. Do you ever make any toast?
He drops the fork on the floor.
Don't touch it! You don't know what will happen if you touch it! You mustn't touch it! You mustn't bend!...(II, 104)

Esslin finds traces of the Joycean internal monologue in the play,[56] and Gale points to the wandering style, as when Len starts his long talk about the objects around him:"That is a table. There is my chair. There is my table. That is a bowl of fruit. There is my chair [...] "(II, 96); Gale compares it to the "Benjy section in William Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury or an Ionesco character".[57] This stylistic diversity, interwoven with Pinter's own variety, creates a linguistic variety that somewhat makes up for the elliptic and ambiguous structure of the play. The beauty of the drama in The Dwarfs is conveyed through the variety of the language, and this is the case too in Landscape, Silence and Old Times.

- IV -

In Landscape and Silence Pinter begins to develop and give his own touch to Beckett's anti-theatre, just as he has developed all through his career traditional themes, structures and techniques. Like The Dwarfs, these two short plays employ a Beckettian structure: they are compressed and there is little or no movement in them, and the plot is no more than episodes and reveries created in the memories of the characters. Pinter, however, does not put his characters in urns as in Beckett's Play --- the play that immediately prefigures Pinter's plays. He conveys the same imagery of stasis but through contrast only. The vividness of the emotions in Pinter's plays contrasts with the physical separation of the characters on the stage and thus reveals the stagnation of their situations without the use of symbolic objects. Here, Maeterlinck's dream of a static drama is incorporated within the British tradition. Landscape and Silence are pieces of beautiful art, though --- like some anti-theatre --- they deprive the stage of action and acting, the essence of theatre. One wonders if poetic and novel-like monologues have become a new form of drama. These two short plays and the next major work, Old Times,

seem to suggest that they have the answer, "yes". As the music-hall has become one of the forms of contemporary drama, these plays might become one of the forms of future theatre. Indeed, Peter Davison finds in these two short plays examples of the continuity of the music-hall tradition within the new forms of contemporary British drama.[56]

The title of Landscape suggests that Pinter had in mind the idea of making a tableau like those in Beckett's plays but through language only. The tableau is to show a landscape as seen by the characters. Pinter makes Beth a painter. She is interested in the principles of painting and this makes her choose to reflect her emotions as if she is drawing on a canvas. She always remembered, she says:

> in drawing, the basic principles of shadow and light. Objects intercepting the lights cast shadows. Shadow is deprivation of light. The shape of the shadow is determined by that of the object. But not always. Not always directly. Sometimes it is only indirectly affected by it. Sometimes the causes of the shadow cannot be found.
>
> Pause
>
> But always bore in mind the basic principles of drawing.
>
> Pause
>
> So that I never lost track. Or heart. (III, 195-6)

Beth speaks in the play about the sun, the open air, the beach, and Duff speaks about the shade of the trees and rain. Beth is obsessed with the beach, the sand and the love she experienced one day on a remote beach. Duff seems concerned to obliterate that image of the beautiful landscape Beth has in mind. His image of the pond, "the dog shit, the duckshit... all kinds of shit" (III, 180), comically contrasts with her picture. In an attempt to superimpose his image on hers, he takes her by memory to the village, to the hotel, to the bar and even distorts her dream by talking about the process of making beer down in the cellar --- a very dark place contrasted with her sunny beach. When she begins to remember her age and that she is older than before, he feels relieved: "At least now ... at least now, I can walk down to the pub in peace and up to the pond in peace, with no-one to nag the shit out of me "(III, 192). But soon she goes back to the past, to the beginnings of her love adventure until she goes back in memory to her landscape.

The beach scene and the contrasting scenes Duff superimposes on it constitute the complete painting of Landscape. The painting, through words and sounds, lights certain aspects of their lives as well as casting shadow

upon others. Beth is fighting time and age through memory: she tries to stay within those moments which she has enjoyed in her life. Duff stamps his shadow on her painting in a way similar to her description of making her lover "feel [her] shadow"(XII, 178). The causes at Duff's attempts of blurring the lighted parts in her memory are not clear. This is because the lover can be Duff himself or Mr Sykes, and both possibilities have traces in the canvas.

The emotions exposed in Landscape are traditional ones, "a little antiquated", as a critic has rightly observed. This critic adds: "Pinter's themes, of infidelity, of faded passion and painful reminiscence, are familiar ones. Landscape [does] not evoke Beckett, as some critics have suggested, but rather Rattigan —- Rattigan played at the wrong speed".[59] Indeed Beth and Duff are compressed images of, for example, Millie and Crocker-Harris of Rattigan's The Browning Version. If Beth has betrayed Duff, as the play suggests, then Duff suppresses this fact as Harris does. The same emotions but different tactics.

Sound is the central image in Silence as painting is in Landscape. "The silence of the title", Trussler has noticed, "is not some apocalypse of the absurd, but, surely and simply, the silence of the countryside at night —- its

quality of peace which Bates so desperately seeks". [60] At night Ellen "can hear [herself]" in the silence. "Cup my ears. My heart beats in my ears. Such a silence. Is it me? Am I silent or speaking? How can I know? Can I know such things?[...] I seem to be old. Am I old now? No-one will tell me. I must find a person to tell me these things" (III, 211). Rumsey has probably been the one who tells her things she needs. He has cared for her and perhaps shared love with her and made her love the country. Then Bates gave her another experience in a noisy crowded town. Ellen prefers the middle-aged Rumsey and she shares with him the love of the quiet country. Bates, rejected for not having these two qualities, tries to imagine himself older: "someone call[s] me grandad..."(III, 203). Ellen, also rejected by Rumsey because, as he explains to her, he is too old for her, again imagines herself to be older. Rumsey in the quietness of his age and his environment remembers his love for Ellen and tries to content himself with this memory. His age stops him at this passive level. Each one of the three, therefore, hears his own tones inside his or her head. The three tones infuse for a few moments to be separated again. Time has joined and separated these three characters. What remains is only the sounds in the silence of the night.

As in Landscape, the emotions in Silence evoke Rattigan. Ellen, like Hester in The Deep Blue Sea, is lost between the mature man and the young lover. Like her, too, she has to continue life alone, remembering the beautiful moments of the past.

In Old Times Pinter strikes a balance between dream and reality. Katharine Worth notices the use of the film technique which serves this purpose in the play, especially at the beginning and at the end .[61] One year before Pinter wrote Old Times he had adapted L. P. Hartley's novel The Go-Between[62] for the screen, and moved the action forward and backward, mixing reality with illusion. In Old Times he does not use the same scenic structure, but he achieves similar effects through language and the dividing silences. After the New York production of Old Times he showed his satisfaction with the effect of the sudden appearance of Anna in Act One --- which made her appear "there, but not there". [63] This shows his interest in the duality of image. The ending of the play also has this double effect of dream and reality. On the one hand, the shift to the bedroom in Act Two and the fact that Deeley is the last one to move before he sits in his chair and sobs indicate that he is dreaming. On the other hand, the bright light that

reveals the three characters at the very end of the play contradicts the dream effect and brings the audience back to reality. With this duality Pinter anticipates Handke in his dream-like play The Ride Across Lake Constance (1971) but, of course, in Handke's symbolic play the fantasy is sharper.[64]

Pinter's trio in Old Times --- with one man and two women --- has its parallel in two plays with which Pinter himself has direct contact. The first is Coward's Blithe Spirit, which he directed six years after writing Old Times. The second play is Sartre's No Exit(or In Camera),[65] in which he acted the part of Garcin in 1965 --- five years before writing his play. At least the time sequence makes No Exit a stronger influence on the playwright. To Katharine Worth Old Times

> could almost be taken as a re-write of Blithe Spirit, Coward's comic piece about a man who calls up the ghost of his wife --- with the aid of the deliciously funny Madame Arcati --- ... the similarities of the situation are rather startling and there are some resemblances of details too: Elvira suggests to Charles that he might have called her back to talk of 'old times', for instance, and the rather eerie playing of a sentimental tune, 'always', to help the seance along.
>
> The tunes in Old Times --- which come to mind at that point --- are something rather new for Pinter: along with many pointed allusions to the film Odd Man Out, they seem to indicate a looking out to the audience which might be a move to ease the tightness

of the closed form.[66]

Worth is right in suggesting that Pinter is looking out to the audience through reminding them of songs and of a film of the thirties and forties, but I don't think that the play is a rewriting of Coward's play — though its influence is undeniably great. A more probable model for the play is Sartre's play, because both in structure and in mood the two plays convey similar messages. Sartre's play is concerned about the influence of the "Others" in the "I" of the individual. A man, Garcin, and two women, Inez and Estelle, are put together in one room in the Second Empire in Hell. At first, each one thinks that the others are the official tormentors from Hell's authorities, but they soon discover that their presence with each other is their punishment. "Each of us", Inez deduces",will act as a torturer of the two others" (p. 195). Garcin cannot enjoy the company of any of the two women because he has his own past and more importantly because the presence of a second women prevents any unity with any one of them.

Pinter's play was given the working title "Others With Dancers" and the author mentions that the idea came to him suddenly while he was sitting on a sofa. "The sofa

perhaps",[67] he says, gave him the idea. Both the working title and the idea of the sofa are related to Sartre's play. When Estelle enters as the third partner in the room in Hell, the presence of the sofas attracts her attention:"They're hideous. And just look how they are arranged"(p.188). She is amused with the idea of the sofas separating the three and Garcin being in the central one. In Old Times there are two sofas and a chair in the first act and two divans and an armchair in the second. Deeley is also concerned about the divans:"We sleep here. These are beds. The great thing about these beds is that they are susceptible to any amount of permutation. They can be separated as they are now"(IV, 44). At the end of the play each woman occupies a divan and Deeley "sits slumped", exactly as Sartre's trio "slump on their respective sofas" at the end of their play.

The clever choice of the one-man two-women structure to convey the concept of the interference of the "Others" in the "I" is evident in both plays. Coward's play which appeared four years before Sartre's, imparts a comic picture of the diffusion in emotions after a second marriage and plays cleverly on the theme of betrayal in marriage. Having been freed by luck and by the help of Madame Arcati, Charles

can go into the world a free man, leaving the "broken" house to the ghosts of his nagging wives. By contrast, in Sartre's play and in Pinter's there is no exit. Other people do not give the individual the chance to live freely. Garcin facing the dilemma decides to knock at the door to free himself. He drums on the door shouting: "I'll endure anything, your red-hot tongs and molten lead, your racks and prongs and garrots .... all your fiendish gadgets... Anything, anything would be better than this agony of mind, this creeping pain that gnaws and fumbles and caresses one, and never hurts quite enough"(p. 219). The door suddenly flies open:

> INEZ: Well, Garcin?... You're free to go.
> GARCIN: [meditatively]: Now I wonder why that door opened.
> INEZ: What are you waiting for? Hurry up and go.
> GARCIN: I shall not go.(p. 219)

Deeley is, like Garcin, doomed to the torment of two women. Before the end of the play he finds himself tortured by the fire coming from the two women and decides to stop it somewhere:

> DEELEY:... I mean let's put it on the table, I have my eye on a number of pulses, pulses all round the globe, deprivations and insults, why should I waste valuable space listening to two.
> KATE:(Swiftly) If you don't like it go.
> Pause.

DEELEY: Go? Where can I go?
KATE: To China. Or Sicily.
DEELEY: I haven't got a speedboat. I haven't got a white dinner jacket.(IV, 64)

In Coward's play Elvira kills Ruth accidentally when she meant to kill her husband. In both Sartre's and Pinter's the killing is only symbolic and does not change the situation. Estelle stabs Ines at the end of No Exit; but can one kill a ghost? "Dead! Dead! Dead!" responds Ines, "poison, ropes -- all useless" (p.223). Similarly Kate cannot kill Anna, she is part of her self or selves. "I remember you lying dead... your face was dirty. You lay dead, [...] When you woke my eyes were above you, staring down at you"(IV, 67-8). The play ends with Anna still occupying a room in their worldly hell.

The theme of time and its influence on the intricate composition of the personality is dominant in Pinter's work since Landscape and Silence. It is treated from different angles in Old Times, No Man's Land and Betrayal and in one of his recent short plays: A Kind of Alaska. Pinter's interest in this subject can be related to his spending the year 1972 writing The Proust Screenplay: A La Recherche du Temps Perdu.[68] Pinter considers that year the "best

working year of [his] life".[69] In his introduction to this screenplay, Pinter tells that "The subject was time. In Le Temp Retrouve, Marcel, in his forties, hears the bells of his childhood. His childhood, long forgotten, is suddenly present with him, but his consciousness of himself as a child, his memory of the experience, is more real, more acute than the experience itself".[70] The past Marcel recollects, in his own way, is full of physical and mental pain. His innocence when he was a child is forfeited by his discovery of sexual perverts and his manhood is embittered by doubts about the loyalty of his lover Albertine. After her death in a horse accident, Marcel is confused about her reality. Andree, her friend, gives him contradictory stories about Albertine's lesbianism. The play ends with these memories teasing him for ever. His only escape, as the ending of the play suggests, is to indulge in life and accept it as it is. Old Times has traces of the teasing influence of memory. Deeley cannot explain the relationship between his wife and her friend. Yet the treatment of the theme of time in Pinter's play is more complicated. It is one of the causes of the irremediable split in the personality of the characters.

The memories of the past in Old Times threaten the tranquil life of the characters. Anna's return is significant and is alarming to the husband and wife because it revives the past. They both show nervousness when they talk about her coming. Kate tries to suppress her memory of their friendship. "The word friend ... when you look back ... all that time [...] It is a very long time".(IV, ?). As for Deeley, Anna's memory creates in him doubts about his wife's loyalty to him. He wants, for example, to know if she met any of Anna's friends(IV, 12). When Anna begins to recollect her memories about her adventures with Kate in London, Deeley changes the subject: "We rarely got to London",is his response. Soon Anna dominates the situation by winning Deeley to her side. She makes fun of Kate by comparing her to a casserole. The duel becomes in the present and Kate tries to evoke the emotions of the other two by vague responses".My head is quite fixed",she says in one of these instances",I have it on"(IV, 20). Later Kate becomes nervous and sharply rebukes Anna: "You talk of me as if I were dead"(IV, 30). Near the end of Act One Kate falls for Anna. Anna can decide where to spend the evening and takes Kate back in memory to the past when they used to meet men like "Charly, Jake or McCabe ". The two women in agreement means that Deeley's situation is difficult. Kate

begins to speak about the sun and the heat, a suggestion that she might follow Anna's steps and go to Sicily. In defence, he resorts to gibber: "I had a great crew in Sicily. A marvellous cameraman. Irving Shultz [...] We took a pretty austere look at the women in black. [...] My name is Orson Welles"(IV, 38). When he finds that this does not work, he speaks about his knowledge of "prostitutes of all kinds"(IV, 38) — perhaps an indirect attempt to rebuke Kate.

Act Two begins with Deeley and Anna alone and so there is a chance for mutual understanding for the time being. Even then Kate is still part of their conversation. Their funny talk about drying her after the bath hides behind it the challenge for possession. When Kate comes out of the bath they both sing to her (or to each other, thus challenging Kate). Kate is still under the impression of Anna and speaks of the sun and her choice of partners as in the old days. When Deeley feels that this situation has turned out to the advantage of Anna he loses his temper: "Am I alone in beginning to find all this distasteful?"(IV, 62)he asks. It is now Kate's turn for revenge and so she asks him to go. To defend himself Deeley announces to her that he and Anna knew each other before. Anna here finds it

suitable to side with Deeley. At the end Kate suppresses again her memory of Anna and imagines her dead and teases her by boasting that she herself is the one who really has got Deeley. Kate has hidden her power to the end but that does not mean that she is the winner. The memory has distorted the image of tranquillity of the converted farm house. Memory in Old Times does not bring happiness and does not improve a situation. What makes Deeley and Anna feel happy annoys Kate and what makes Kate and Anna rejoice makes Deeley jealous. This complication of the theme of the memory is not a familiar one. Memory in, for example, Coward's Private Lives and Rattigan's The Deep Blue Sea makes the characters understand their situations better. In Rattigan's play the woman does not return to either of the two lovers, but she becomes more experienced in the problem of life and its illusions.

The complicated relationship between the three characters in Old Times is also unfamiliar. It is not simply a man teased by two nagging women as in Coward's Blithe Spirit. Each of the three characters in Old Times constitutes an important aspect in the life of the other two and has a very strong influence on him or her. Deeley is torn between the sensual Anna and the "classic female

figure"(IV, 32) of Kate. Kate has two opposite inclination: one to be a wife, as her upbringing, — "a parson's daughter"[71] — demands, and the other, to revolt against this and share a loose life like that one she experienced with Anna in London — perhaps even to be her lesbian partner, as the play suggests. And Anna is torn between the two. The play, therefore, draws parallel with the anti-theatre depiction of the human personality. Its closest model, as I have pointed out, is Sartre's No Exit. Pinter cleverly introduces this theme in a semi-realistic situation, thus perhaps making the impact more related to life than Sartre's more philosophical play. Pinter also shares the same subject with a number of contemporary playwrights. Beckett uses it in Not I, Handke in Kaspar and Genet in The Blacks.[72] He follows these playwrights in creating an irremediable split in the complicated consciousness of his characters. Like these different authors Pinter creates incomplete and confused characters. In his own semi-realistic approach, he brackets his characters within themselves to reveal their split personalities. No sooner does one of his characters find resort in one of his different selves than the others interfere and shake the balance, and this process goes on as long as there are people. "For ever, my God, how funny",

shouts Estelle with laughter at the end of No Exit, "for ever"(p. 223).

Notes

1. To J. R. Taylor the success of *The Caretaker* is "almost entirely" due to the television production of *A Night Out* and *The Birthday Party* because it "familiarized a vast audience with Pinter's style and created the climate of opinion in which his later work could command instant acceptance". See *Anger and After* (London: Methuen, 1962), pp. 217-8.

2. *The Theatre of Protest and Paradox*(New York:New York University Press,1964), pp.197-8. Cited in Perry Claude Dillon,*The Characteristics of the French Theatre of the Absurd in the Works of Edward Albee and Harold Pinter*(Ph.D. dissertation: University of Arkansas,1968), p. 262.

3. A number of critics have applied this nomenclature to Pinter's art. See, for example, Simon Trussler, *The Plays of Harold Pinter: An Assessment*(London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1973), pp. 161-2, where he quotes Nigel Dennis:"Mr Pinter is perhaps the first playwright to think himself exclusively into the actor: it is this that he is obsessed with".

4. See Irving Wardle, "The Territorial Struggle", in John and Anthea Lahr(eds.), A Casebook of Harold Pinter's The Homecoming(London: Davis-Poynter, 1973), p.37. Wardle says Wesker's complaint "does not fit", yet I tend to agree with Wesker.

5. Cited by William Angus, "Modern Theatre Reflects the Times", Queens Quarterly, 70, no. 2(Summer 1965), p. 362.

6. The books, theses and critical studies written on Pinter are counted by the hundreds while those written on Coward and Rattigan, for example, are no more than the number of fingers on one hand.

7. Simon Trussler, The Plays of Harold Pinter: An Assessment (London: Victor Collancz Ltd., 1973),p. 13.

8. Ibid.

9. The Daily Mail (London), 28 November 1967, cited in Martin Esslin,Pinter: A Study of his Plays , 3rd edition(London: Eyre Methuen, 1977),pp. 37-8.

10. Trussler, p.33.

11. The author refers to "Bernard F. Dukore", The Theatre of Harold Pinter", Tulane Drama Review, VI, iii, 1962, p.48.

12. Trussler, pp.40-41.

13. Interview with Kenneth. Tynan, BBC Home Service, 28 October 1960, quoted in Martin Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd(Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 266.

14. See Walter Kerr, Harold Pinter (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1967), who considers Pinter "The only man working in the theatre today who writes existential plays existentially"(p.3). See also Esslin Pinter: A Study of his Plays 3rd. Edition(London: Eyre Methuen, 1977), p. 35, and Robert Brustein, The Theatre of Revolt(London & Guildford: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1967), p.27.

15. Harold Pinter: A Collection of Critical Essays (New Jersy: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972),p. 2.

16. Irving Wardle, "The Territorial Struggle", Lahr, pp. 37-44.

17. Benedict Nightingale, "Inaction Replay", New Statesman, 89, 2 May 1975, p. 601.

18. Guido Almansi, "Harold Pinter's Idiom of Lies", in C.W. Bigsby (ed.), Contemporary English Drama, "Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies", 19,(London: Edward Arnold, 1981), pp.82-3.

19. (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1982), pp. 401-2.

20. R.B. Parker, "The Theory and Theatre of the Absurd", Queens Quarterly, 73(Autumn 1966), p. 422-444. After examining the mood of the plays of Beckett, Ionesco and Genet with some reference to Pinter and Albee, Parker comes to the conclusion that the "full assertion of Camus' Sisyphus does not seem to be found anywhere within the theatre of the absurd: its characters are victims, not heroes....The absurdists' plays never wholly negate negation". Parker refers to Camus' positive call for living the "present" despite the knowledge that there is no future.

21. Esslin, Pinter: A Study of his Plays, pp. 46-7.

22. The Paris Review X, no 39, 196, p.48. Cited in Esslin, Pinter: A Study of his Plays, p.33.

23. Taken from Trussler, who quotes The Birthday Party and The Room(New York: Grove Press, 1961), p.28.

24. Noel Coward, Plays: Four (London: Methuen, 1979), p.28. Hereafter page numbers of quotations from Blithe Spirit will be cited in the text.

25. Elin Francis Diamond, Harold Pinter: Comic Traditionalist (Ph.D. dissertation: University of California, Davies, 1980), p. 56.

26. Esslin, Pinter: A Study of his Plays, p. 102.

27. "Theatre of Language", Tulane Drama Review (Spring 1963), p. 182.

28. Andrew K. Kennedy, Six Dramatists in Search of a Language: Studies in Dramatic Language (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975),pp. 168-9.

29. Ibid. p. 166.

30. Terence Rattigan, Separate Tables: Table by the Window and Table Number Seven (London: Samuel French, 1956), p. 82. Hereafter page numbers will be cited in the text.

31. The Christian Century, 22 November 1961, p. 1405.

32. Esslin, Pinter: A Study of his Plays, p.96.

33. A. C. Ward (London: Longman, 1970), p.24.

34. "Theatre Chronicle", Hudson Review, 14 (1961), pp.590-1.

35. The New Republic Vol 145. 23 October 1961, p. 30(My italics).

36. Quoted by Cale, p. 94.

37. Christian Century, p. 1406.

38. Noel Coward, Plays Vol. III, (London: Eyre Methuen, 1979), p. 9. Hereafter, page numbers of quotations from Design for Living will be cited in the text.

39. Katharine Worth quotes the same passage to indicate the reference to Hay Fever. See Revolutions in Modern English Drama (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1972), p.

98.

40. Taylor notices that between The Room and The Lover there is "a complete dramatic gamut from total objectivity to total subjectivity". By objectivity he means a type of surface realism that contrasts with the subjective realism which studies the characters from within. See Anger and After, pp. 351-53.

41. Beckett at Sixty: A Festschrift (London: Calder and Boyar, 1967), p. 86.

42. Anger and After, p. 353.

43. John Russell Taylor, "Pinter's Game of happy families", in John and Anthea Lahr(eds.), A Casebook of Harold Pinter's The Homecoming, p. 61.

44. Esslin, Pinter: A Study of his Plays, p. 135.

45. Kerr, p. 35.

46. Irving Wardle, "The Territorial Struggle", in Lahr, pp. 37-44.

47. Gale, P. 138.

48. William Baker and Stephen Tabachnick, Harold Pinter (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyed, 1973), p.3. They quote Barry Supple, Jewish Chronicle, 25 June 1965, pp. 7, 31.

49. Supple, Jewish Chronicle, p. 7.

50. Baker and Tabachnick, p. 115. They refer to a meeting between Pinter and the designer Harold Cohn in an attempt to make a limited edition of The Homecoming. The playwright and the designer are reported by Charles Spencer, "Pinter in Print", The Jewish Quarterly Vol 16, Autumn 1968, p.43, as being delighted to share family and childhood background. From the details of this meeting Spencer reads the play as a Jewish family play and connects it to Pinter's life.

51. Harold Hobson, "Pinter Minus the Moral", The Sunday Times, 6 June 1965, p. 39.

52. Trussler, p. 134.

53. Pinter: A Study of his Plays, pp. 117-125.

54. Gale, p.111. He quotes Lawrence M. Bonsky, "Harold Pinter: An Interview", Paris Review, 10, no. 20(Fall 1966), p. 23.

55. T.S. Eliot, The Cocktail Party (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1974), p. 74.

56. Esslin, Pinter: A Study of his Plays, p. 124.

57. Gale, p. 113.

58. Peter Davison, Contemporary Drama and the Public Dramatic Tradition in England(London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1982), pp. 58-66.

59. Peter Ackroyd, "Wrong Speed Pattigan", The Times, 5 February 1983, p. 7.

60. Trussler, p. 171.

61. Worth, p. 93.

62. Harold Pinter, Five Screenplays(London: Methuen, 1973).

63. Interview with Mel Gussow, New York Times Magazine, December 1971, cited in Worth, p. 92.

64. Handke's Der Ritt Über den Bodensee (The Ride Across Lake Constance) is summarized on a half-title page by the author as "Are you dreaming or are you speaking?" The characters in this play remind each other throughout the performance that they are dreaming. At one instance in the play when visitors from the world of reality find themselves obliged to leave in confusion and the dreamers throw away their suitcases, the author demands that "no crashing sound" is to be heard, but when the hat and gloves are thrown a crash of the suitcases is to be heard. See the translation by Michael Roloff (London Methuen, 1973), p.66.

65. J. P. Sartre, Three Plays: The Respectable Prostitute, Lucifer and the Lord and In Camera, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982). Hereafter page numbers of quotations from No Exit [In Camera] will be cited in the text.

66. Worth, p. 99.

67. Gale, p. 136. He quotes Gussow, "A Conversation with Harold Pinter", New York Times Magazine, 5 December 1971, p. 127.

68.(London: Eyre Methuen in association with Chatto and Windus, 1978).

69 Ibid. p. viii.

70. Ibid.

71. The inclusion of this fact about Kate's background is a rare instance in which Pinter gives causes for a characters' behaviour. There is similarity here between his approach and Rattigan's in The Deep Blue Sea. Hester's emotional dilemma is returned to her being "a clergyman's daughter" (p. 19).

72. See Gay McAuley, "The Problem of Identity: Theme, Form and Theatrical Method in Les Negres, Kaspar and Old Times", Southern Review, 8, 1975, pp. 55-65.

CHAPTER FIVE

NO MAN'S LAND

If any one play can sum up and embody the main distinctive features of Pinter's drama, this play is No Man's Land. After introducing the new themes of memory and the influence of other people on the individual in Landscape, Silence and Old Times, Pinter, it seems, had decided to make a revision of his career in order to incorporate these themes in one play. No Man's Land includes the different themes of his previous works: menace, mental weakness, sexual obsession and the problems of memory. Moreover, structurally and technically the play also reveals the dual motive of his artistic creativity: on the one hand there is the clear effort to impart an image of the alienated personality in the Beckettian manner and on the other there is the creation of life-like characters who incarnate this image. Seriousness is intertwined with entertainment. While Pinter, as we shall see, succeeds in entertaining the audience in No Man's Land, the impression

among many critics is that he has some problems in communicating a powerful image, unless the play is taken as a personal expression of the author's fear of failure after his success. The experiment of No Man's Land, therefore, supports the view that Pinter's artistic strength lies in creating actable plays that provide actors with good acting roles. In No Man's Land even the Jewish heritage which has indirectly given some of his plays a human touch has disappeared. In this play the anti-theatrical and the realistic elements are not in harmony with one another.

The anti-theatrical elements can be easily detected in No Man's Land. The no man's land of the title is the human mind alienated and split in a way that accords with the spirit of post-modernism. Pinter's tendency to cull different elements from the negative spirit of anti-theatre has been a point that has interested many critics. John Weightman makes a list of the different points of similarity which the critics have discovered:

> The Closed Room (as in Sartre's Huis Clos) where the characters confront each other in their subject/object tensions, and which is at once home and hell, womb and battleground, a collective area or an image of the splintered individual mind; the menace (as in Ionesco, Albee, Kafka [and we can add Handke here]) which is the subject /object conflict left in suspension, as it were, like a haze of paranoia; Time, Memory, and Identity (as in

> Ionesco, Beckett, Genet), the uncertainties of which lead to endless fluctuation of personae; and the Inexplicable Oneiric Detail (as Ionesco, Beckett, Robbe-Grillet [also Handke can be added here]) which the mind can only chew on unsuccessfully, since it has no means of telling whether the detail is genuinely random, or significantly phenomenological, or symbolic within some given system - Christian, Freudian, Jungian, Marxist, etc. We can also mention the general paradox that, as in Robbe-Grillet, the language is always meticulously rhythmic and clear, while the overall effect is opaque.[1]

The variety of sources, however, instead of creating one strong image, has made the play full of unco-ordinated bits and pieces. There is a deep rift between the bizarre ambience these elements convey and the traditional display of character.

The opening exchanges between Hirst and Spooner introduce the audience to this rift. "As it is?" Hirst asks Spooner about the vodka and Spooner replies, "As it is, yes please, absolutely as it is". From what happens afterwards in the play, one is reminded of Beckett's opening of Waiting for Godot. Like Beckett's play, No Man's Land begins and ends reminding the audience that nothing changes. The concluding passage recited by Spooner and cheered by Hirst reiterates the opening sentence: what is going on in the mind is "as it is", static, like the icy silence of death. Yet this image is not given enough attention by the

playwright. On the contrary, the involvement of the main characters in mundane discussions, as if they are acting in a Coward or Rattigan play, does not explain the sudden concluding image of the play, whereas its opening subscribes to the familiar convention whereby characters are introduced over a glass of liquor .

Spooner and Hirst are, like Vladimir and Estragon, thinking clowns. Pinter's couple are poets - or they claim to be so - and they have, especially Spooner, some experience of the rough and dark aspects of human relationships. They complement each other and could be imagined as two faces of the same personality, as Didi and Gogo are often thought to be by the critics. Hirst is the rich and successful artist who has come to the verge of total mental emptiness and Spooner is the unsuccessful artist who still has the stamina to strive and create anew. The first is constrained because of his social position and the second is free. At one point in the play Hirst tries to impersonate Spooner in his zeal and activity. "I did the same"(IV, 90) he reacts when Spooner boasts that he is interested in the "preservation of art" and brags that he uses his cottage as a meeting place for young poets. Moreover, in Act One Hirst puts in memorable words his

inexplicable situation. In a reverie he announces that "No man's land ... does not move ... or change ... or grow old .. remains ... forever ... icy ... silent"(IV, 96). At the end of the play it is Spooner who affirms the message. The two finally agree that any endeavour for unity is futile. "No. You are in no man's land", asserts Spooner,"which never moves, which never changes, which never grows older, but which remains forever, icy and silent"(IV, 153). One of the suggested interpretations of the play is that it is a personal expression of the author's state of mind. Harold Clurman writes: "The play, an emanation of the writer's troubled being, is projected in 'detached' imagery. Like the unsuccessful writer (his conscience, his alter ego; the play may be auto-criticism: the two writers being one 'before and after')."[2] Only if this interpretation of the play is true is its imagery very impressive --- though the writer was only forty-five when this play was written, which is still an early age for such contemplation. The play becomes one of the frankest criticisms any writer can make of his career. By trying to enter into the no man's land of the human mind, as conceived by Pinter's theory of split identity and of the impossibility of communication, Pinter is admitting his arrival at an impasse. The arrival at a point when all the

characters are lying and playing games with equal strength can artistically lead either to the silence Hirst and Spooner speak about, or the author would have to change his style. The playwright chose the second alternative. The clarity of the language used in his next play Betrayal, suggests that the playwright has decided to extricate himself from the formula of obfuscation by going back to the language of literary realism. The characters in Betrayal, as will be seen, communicate with openness and frankness, though the oblique language is not totally abandoned. In a recent study of Pinter's art, Guido Almansi and Simon Henderson come to a similar conclusion about the dead-end which Pinter has put himself into. "Pinter", they write, "appears to have come latterly to the logical impasse of Endgame, the ultima Thule of man's alienation in modern drama where everyone lives 'pretty-much alone' ."[3] This point will be returned to in discussing the limitations of the language games in Pinter's drama. It is worth noting here that Pinter's self criticism is not a theme that is likely to appeal to an audience. Moreover, this interpretation is, in fact, only one of the possible meanings some critics have inferred from the play and at their own risk.

Another Beckettian element in No Man's Land is the use of cricket as a structural image of the games played by the characters in a way similar to the chess image of Endgame. Pinter explicitly refers to this sport twice in the play and some critics point out the fact that the names of the characters are those of famous British cricketers in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries.[4] Pinter not only seems to be trying to imitate Beckett but can be seen as making a travesty of his image. In a vulgar manner he makes Spooner use the terms of the sport to inquire about Hirst's wife.

> How beautiful she was, how tender and how true. Tell me with what speed she swung in the air, with what velocity she came off the wicket, whether she was responsive to finger spin, whether you could bowl a shooter with her, or an offbreak with a legbreak action. In other words did she google? (IV, 92)

Structurally speaking, the play can be compared to a cricket match. The four characters exchange language blows and parry them impulsively. The vague identity of each of the four characters and the way they address each other without contextual reference resemble the arbitrary movement of the ball in the field. However, the cricket imagery in No Man's Land does not convey with strength any of the themes of the play. Hirst's waiting for death, for example, which echoes

Hamm's, is not given enough emphasis. The haziness of his drunken mind has already put him in a second world of ice and silence. One can see him dead though he still speaks and his pain-killer (whisky and vodka), unlike Hamm's, is abundant. Moreover, death does not have its strong power on Spooner --- Clov's echo.

Language games, which have been the means of hiding personal experiences in plays like The Birthday Party and The Homecoming have become an artistic strategy in Old Times and No Man's Land. The games in No Man's Land diverge sharply from the norms of comprehension of the traditional drama. Each of the two main characters assumes several completely different personalities even within one act of the play. In Act I Spooner plays the game of a sycophant who seeks the acceptance of his benefactor . He is a man of"intelligence and perception"(IV, 69) he boasts, and then makes Hirst "kindness itself"(IV, 70). Spooner then continues his wheedling throughout the act. He alternates between self-approbation and self-abnegation. The way in which he introduces himself to Hirst makes the audience feel that he is lying. To make himself an unreliable and vulgar person in the tradition of most comic figures, he tells a story about his relationship with his mother in which he

matches her hate for him with his love for her currant buns. Suddenly the game changes and the vulgar Spooner becomes a man of literary interests. He and Hirst begin to exchange ready-mades:

> SPOONER: When we had our cottage ... when we had our cottage ... we gave our visitors tea, on the lawn.
> HIRST: I did the same.
> SPOONER: On the lawn?
> HIRST: I did the same.
> SPOONER: You had a cottage?
> HIRST: Tea on the lawn. (IV, 90-91)

Before the end of Act I Hirst returns from his nap half drunk and inquires about the identity of Spooner as if he is not the one who brought him. Even here within the context of the world of dream and the haziness of the drunk mind, Spooner is sober enough to play his game: "It was I drowning in your dream"(IV, 109) is his interpretation of Hirst's dream.

In Act II the games are chaired by Hirst rather than by Spooner. He addresses his guest as an old friend in Oxford, Charles Wetherby, and here also Spooner accepts the name(or, in other words, the game). They exchange memories of cuckoldry and betrayal until the servants come and change the subject of the game, fixing it, without any reason, on winter and night. The emissaries of the external world, of

the "organisation", as Foster names it -- and one wonders here if Pinter is parodying himself in The Birthday Party -- can control the direction of the game and its results.

The development of Pinter's drama more and more into the world of language games is a result of his consistent belief in the "deliberate evasion of communication"[5] between people. This consistency gives him a unique position among his British contemporaries. Almansi and Henderson put Pinter in a category of his own because of this peculiar language.

> He is not part of that fatal tradition of English literature, going back to G. B. Shaw and the theatre of ideas, to D. H. Lawrence and the literature of feelings, according to which language is no problem -- the supposed problems being intellection (the manipulation of ideas) and sincerity (the expression of feelings). 'Language is words .... It's bridges, so that you can get safely from one place to another': This is the claim in the first act of Arnold Wesker's Roots; and the belief in the conductive power of words -- a belief somewhat remote from the main currents of modern European literary practice -- permeates a great deal of contemporary English drama (not only the works of Wesker, but those of Osborne and Arden, of Mercer and Mortimer, of Bond and Shaffer). At the core of their shared belief lies an immoderate faith in a language of enlightenment, whereby words are used mimetically to throw light on the most obscure areas of life (as if Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations had been in vain, or had never superseded the Tractatus). Pinter, however, is aware that 'the more acute the experience the less articulate [is] its expression'(I, 11). He is concerned with

> manipulating not a language of enlightenment but a language of obfuscation; not a language of social progress but a language of existential survival; not a language of communal faith but a language of divisive strategy. The words of his plays are intransigent and intransitive: they cannot be transferred to other levels of meaning, be they philosophical, ideological or allegorical. You can play all sorts of critical games with them, but it is a mistake, as we shall show, to consider them out of the context of their dramatic precincts. In Pinter words are not bridges: they are barbs to protect the wired enclosure of the self.[6]

This distinctive use of language, however, has its own problems, as will be seen from the critical comments on the language games of No Man's land. Before giving some views of the limitations of this type of theatrical language, I shall first consider the concept of language games itself. Critics like Almansi and Henderson and Austin E. Quigley explain Pinter's style by employing Wittgenstein's linguistic analysis. "The notion that language itself is a kind of a game", write Almansi and Henderson, "is one of the major insights to be found in Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations. Communication, according to this view, is simply an exchange of various 'language games'. Like all games, these too must have rules, which are laid down at each instance, enabling the participants to communicate. Even deceit, Pinter's most typical form of communication, has to be regulated in the Wittgensteinian sense, since

'lying is a language game that needs to be learned like any other'."[7] Of course, this is a very brilliant explanation of the "idiom of lies"[8] in Pinter's work, yet it does not explain the stress on this type of perverted language, if it is only one type among many categories of games. This emphasis on perversion could be seen as a commitment by the writer to an evil vision of human nature. Almansi and Henderson accuse contemporary playwrights of whitewashing real human weakness, which is not true. The peculiarity of Pinter lies in his stress on one aspect of human nature. This is what Almansi and Henderson themselves aver when they say: "Pinter's games, in line with Berne's theory,[9] are usually played in bad faith, as a flight from reality in the Sartrean sense or as a flight from confrontation in true ethological fashion (when in doubt, the animal runs away)."[10]

Almansi and Henderson also cleverly explain the banal exchanges in Pinter's drama on similar grounds. Of the different games listed by Wittgenstein and Berne, they have found that Pinter has employed two modes: "the rhetorical mode [which] aims to create a divide between two or more mutually hostile opponents"(under which all lies can be grouped) and "the phatic mode [which] aims to establish a

contact or a union between two partners."[11] The latter mode, as they explain, is used as a means of breaking the silence of loneliness. Although the second mode is relatively minor in Pinter's work, they find him, because of his sharp ear for everyday banal exchanges, as "more realist than the realists ('plus royale que le roi'), a 'hyper-realist' in the sense the word has acquired in the modern art scene".[12] Pinter's ability to record life-like language when people are living moments of their routines is undeniably one of his greatest merits, but if we consider the quantitative aspect of literary realism, that which tries to communicate the largest possible aspects of life, Pinter then becomes a reductionist rather than a "hyper-realist". Once an author or a dramatist specializes in one area of human behaviour, he has a great chance of surpassing those others who are concerned about every aspect that is related to the human problem. In No Man's Land he seems to be trying to make fun of those who concern themselves with aspects of life that differ from his own. This is when he makes Spooner, in a state of infatuation, address Hirst thus:

> I am enraptured. Tell me more. Tell me more about the quaint little perversions of your life and times. Tell me more, with the authority and brilliance you can muster, about the socio-

> politico-economic structure of the environment in which you attained to the age of reason. Tell me more.

And to this, after a pause, Hirst answers, "There is no more"(IV, 92).

Moreover, the stress on the bad faith of the characters and the avoidance of speaking of any subject related to life, in its variety, has the risk of becoming redundant and could freeze into a fixed formula. Critics have noticed this. They point to the repetitive nature of Pinter's art. John Simon, for example, claims that Pinter is moving in a familiar territory and that his tricks no longer shock.

> if Hirst and Spooner don't know each other in Act I, you may be sure they will be old friends in Act II; if Hirst does most of the listening in Act I, you may count on his doing most of the talking in Act II; if Spooner is nastily locked in in Act I, he will surely be feasted in Act II. Then there are the reversals within the reversals: towards the end of Act II Hirst begins to stop knowing Spooner, whom he suddenly calls Wetherby; Briggs, whom he has strangely been calling Denson, he suddenly calls, even more strangely, Albert. Spooner, who has been all along differential to Hirst, suddenly condescends to him; in the end, out of a clear blue sky, he even sides with his keeper-tormentors...[13]

In a very unusual way Almansi and Henderson compare the games played in The Collection, Old Times, Night and No Man's Land with a popular British game known as "consequences". In this game each of a number of players "writes down a part of the story, hands over the paper, and passes it on to another player who continues the story. After several stages, the resulting (nonsensical) stories are read out."[14] One doubts the value of drama if it becomes a form of a game of "consequences". At least in this game the different authors guarantee a change to the formula to which Pinter has chained himself.

This type of drama, of course, is not good meat for those who seek more than entertainment. If drama is more than language games some critics have a good argument against No Man's Land. John Simon, for example, disagrees with Austin Quigley when the latter says:

> If one approaches the plays [of Pinter] with a belief that truth, reality and communication ought to conform to certain norms, then the plays will remain tantalizingly enigmatic. But once it is realized that all of these concepts are, like any others, moves in language games, the barrier to an understanding of Pinter is removed.[15]

Simon argues that he has never found

> Pinter's plays tantalizingly enigmatic.... Nor did I ever believe that truth, reality and communication ought to conform to certain norms; but I did and do believe that plays should conform to certain conceivable, even if not immediately recognizable, notions of truth, reality and communication. What I emphatically reject is that 'any other' concepts are mere moves in language games....[16]

Simon obviously does not like Pinter's theatre, but his criticism directs attention to the problem of Pinter's duality. To indulge himself in the world of the unknown, the playwright must give evidence that he is somewhere there in a believable no man's land. Otherwise, the work would remain peripheral, whatever its artistic value. John Weightman also shares Simon's criticism of Pinter's type of obfuscation:

> Where linguistic expression is concerned, only one form of obscurity is legitimate -- the honest obscurity which comes from trying to say something so subtle or so complex that it defeats all attempts of clarity on the part of the writer, and can only be suggested by an interplay of ambiguities. Some poets and philosophers are ambiguous in this way but, as Alain says, you can thump on this kind of obscurity and it rings true.
>
> Some Absurdist plays stand the test as well, but not, I think, No Man's Land. Its mysteries appear to be mostly en trompe l'oeil; they do not seem to have been imposed upon the author himself by the ineffability of his perceptions. Either they have been carefully arranged for the benefit of those spectators who enjoy being tantalised, or they result -- as in Ionesco's less successful works -- from the conviction that the dream-like incomprehensible, with its inevitable margin of

> poetic doubt, is always a safer bet than the comprehensible, which may expose its own nakedness.[17]

To be on the safe side, however, Pinter offers something to compensate for the anti-theatre effect of his plays. In No Man's Land there is a general consensus among critics that the play is actable and has a great chance of success if good actors (like John Gielgud and Ralph Richardson) perform it. Even those critics who have found the play meaningless, do confess that the characters, especially Spooner, are memorable ones. John Weightman, for example, ends his article about the play praising Spooner's character: "curiously enough, the personality of Spooner stands out sharply in several scenes, as if it belonged to a quite different, intelligible play, in which subtlety and coherence of characterisation had been deliberately aimed at".[18] Again, Benedict Nightingale, who dismisses the play and wonders if Pinter is not only "resurrecting mannerisms", finds Spooner's character fascinating: "His [Sir John Gielgud's] Spooner is precious, sour, not to be trusted, a piece of authentic characterisation for which Pinter, too, obviously deserves our thanks. He has, in fact, written a part rather more memorable than the play that contains

it."[19]

It is true that we do not find characters of the same calibre in Coward's and Rattigan's dramas, yet the personality build-up of the characters in No Man's Land is not unfamiliar to British audiences. These audiences are familiar with middle class figures and of men related to art and literature in particular. The ambience of the play is that of rich literary men who enjoy whisky even for breakfast (Spooner is served with this drink at the beginning of Act II). The contents of the dialogue of the play is also within the context of the British tradition: cuckoldry and betrayal, understatements about homosexuality and about class differences and reference to literary works. These can be seen in many plays of Coward and Rattigan. Rattigan's The Browning Version in particular, with its theme of cuckoldry in the ambience of teachers and the way they behave to each other, contains good examples of the topics that appeal to the audiences of the West End. No Man's Land also appeals to these audiences.

Spooner is a traditional comic figure. He has traits like those who were witty enough to accompany kings to amuse and advise them. Hirst, being a "king" in the realm of poetry and criticism, needs a literary orientated comic

companion. "All we have left is the English language", Spooner tells his "master" early in the play, and asks", Can it be salvaged? That is my question". Hirst returns the joke: "Its salvation must rest in you" (IV, 80-1). Spooner claims to be a patron for a number of budding poets whom he receives at his house. He also claims to frequent places where men of letters meet. In his story about the Hungarian arlyistocrat he speaks of a "particular repellent lickspittling herd of literati"(IV, p 86). Ironically, he himself is one of those lickspittling literati.

Moreover, Spooner, like any traditional farceur, does not hide his weaknesses; on the contrary, he makes fun of them. When Hirst asks him about the thing that impressed him about the Hungarian man, he replies: "You expect me to remember what he said? [...] what he said ... all those years ago ... is neither here nor there. It was not what he said but possibly the way he sat which has remained with me all my life and has, I am quite sure, made me what I am"(IV, 87). Again, Spooner's cynicism and his look at other people with caution is another characteristic trait of a comedian. This is how he differentiates between enemies and friends:

To show interest in me or, good gracious, anything

tending towards a positive liking of me, would cause in me a condition of acutest alarm. Fortunately, the danger is remote.

Pause

I speak to you with this startling candour because you are clearly a reticent man, which appeals, and because you are a stranger to me, and because you are clearly kindness itself.(IV, 79)

Almansi and Henderson trace the origin of this type of comedy back to Shakespeare. The recollections of Spooner and Hirst are compared to those of Justice Shallow and Silence in Henry IV, Part Two.

Both pairs in the ancient and the modern play are old, and claim to remember their wild youths spent respectively at the Inns of the Court and at Oxford. They all remember hearing the 'chimes of midnight' with such fictional ladies as Jane Nightwork and Stella Winstanley, and recall their old drinking friends, now dead (Shallow speaks of the 'mad days that I have spent! And to see how many of my old acquaintance are dead!', which is echoed by Hirst: 'What a bunch. What a night, as I recall. All dead now, of course'(IV, 127). Spooner at first mirrors Silence in his quiet acceptance of his passive, listening role; but when Hirst begins to brag about being 'successful awfully early'(IV, 128) Spooner launches into an attack on his antagonist's past, just as Falstaff abuses Shallow's hospitality in his great soliloquy beginning 'Lord, lord,how subject we old men are to his vice of lying!'(III,ii)[20]

New in No Man's Land is the frequent use of obscene words and the insertion into the dialogue of jokes that are not dramatically relevant to the text. These new elements, together with the comic aspects of the characters, suggest an interest in the demands of Aunt Edna. The commerciality that has been the rubric attached to the works of Coward and Rattigan also applies to Pinter here. Not that the term is necessarily the degrading one it has been, as used of the other two playwrights, but as a fact that should not be ignored. Samuel Beckett himself has admitted that Waiting for Godot was conceived as a commercial play.[21] "Experimental or not" writes Robert Hunt, " Pinter can't be accused of being uncommercial."[22]

Pinter resorts to scatological terms in No Man's Land in a manner unprecedented in his output. He has gone beyond the literary limits that he himself has put. He once told a critic:

> I do object to one thing to do with sex: this scheme afoot on the part of many 'liberal minded' persons to open up obscene language to general commerce. It should be the dark secret language of the underworld. There are very few words --- you shouldn't kill them by overuse. I have used such words once or twice in my plays, but I couldn't get them through the Lord Chamberlain. They're great, wonderful words, but must be used very sparingly. The pure publicity of freedom of language fatigues me, because it's a demonstration rather than

something said.[23]

The words "cunt" and "fuck" are frequently used in the play. According to Weightman, Pinter "interrupts the smooth flow of literary English with violent, unjustified obscenities."[24] Simon, in his turn, finds the obscenity touching on "misogyny". [25] He refers to the gratuitous use of the word "cunt" and the use of such a sentence as the following, uttered by Hirst about Spooner's wife: "simply that portion of herself all women keep in reserve, for a rainy day". Moreover, both Weightman and Simon refer to the strong homosexual implications in No Man's Land, which have never been so strong in any of Pinter's previous works.

Likewise the jokes in the play have something of a vulgar tinge to them. For instance, the following joke Spooner makes about the colour of the eyes of Hirst's wife is new type of language in Pinter's output.

> SPOONER:[...] Her eyes, I take it, were hazel?
> [...]
> HIRST: Hazel shit.
> SPOONER: Good lord, good lord, do I detect a touch of the maudlin?
> Pause
> Hazel shit. I ask myself: have I ever seen hazel shit? Or hazel eyes, for that matter? (IV, 93-94)

Sometimes the jokes become subtle, but still the motive is to arouse cheap laughter. An example of this is Briggs' long account of the difficulty of getting out of Bolsover Street(IV, 120-1), which is a typical joke of city dwellers. Again in the following exchange about the places the characters boast of having visited, the comic style is traditional:

> FOSTER: [...] He knows I'm not a liar. Tell him about the Siamese girls.
> BRIGGS: They loved him at first sight.
> FOSTER: (To Spooner) You're not Siamese though, are you?
> BRIGGS: He's a very long way from being Siamese.
> FOSTER: Ever been out there?
> SPOONER: I've been to Amsterdam.(pp. 100-101)

One recalls here the jokes about visiting places in Coward's Design for Living where Leo, as quoted before, boasts of visiting an unfamiliar place called Chuquicamata, or when Leo and Otto begin to list the places they have visited.[26]

No Man's Land, therefore, appeals to the audience as merely a play of instant entertainment, but can hardly go beyond that to create an effective image. Its problem lies in its one-dimensional form of expression: the "idiom of lies" is very persistent in the play. If Pinter frees himself from the formula of creating perverted characters

whose only language is that of perversion and lies, he could surely use his technical and linguistic ingenuity for creating a more lasting and a more comprehensive drama. It is true that the world is full of perverts and crooks, but it is also true that there are people who try to overcome their weaknesses. Pinter's examples do not encourage those who are in search of a new image.

Notes

1. "Another Play for Pinterites", Encounter, 45 (July 1975), p. 24.

2. Harold Clurman, "Theatre", The Nation Vol 221, 16 August 1975, p. 124. See also Antony Suter, "The Dual character and the aim of the Artist in Pinter's No Man's land", Durham University Journal, June 1983, pp. 89-94. Suter compares Pinter situation with that of Eliot and Auden who changed their affiliation at the end of their careers.

3. Guido Almansi and Simon Henderson, Harold Pinter (London and New York: Methuen, 1983), p. 77.

4. P. A. Cairns, "Batting for Pinter", The Times, 7 June 1975, p.139. Cited in Steven H. Gale, Butter's Going Up (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1977), p. 204.

5. An interview with Kenneth Tynan (28 October 1960), as quoted in Martin Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 274.

6. Almansi and Henderson, pp.11-12.

7. Ibid. p. 26. The writers quote Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford, 1963), p. 249.

8. Guido Almansi, "Harold Pinter's Idiom of Lies", in C.W.E. Bigsby, Contemporary English Drama, "Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies, 19" (London: Edward Arnold, 1981), pp. 79-92.

9. The writers refer to Eric Berne, Games People Play(Harmondsworth, 1968), p.151. Berne is quoted as saying: "Intimacy requires stringent circumspection, and is discriminated against.... Society frowns upon candidness, except in privacy; good sense knows that it can always be abused; and the Child fears it because of the unmasking it involves. Hence in order to [avoid] exposing themselves to the dangers of intimacy, most people compromise for games when they are available..."(Almansi and Henderson, p. 25). Yet one can argue that intimacy is not the only kind of relationship people seek. Moreover, I do not think that children fear intimacy. They are on the contrary seekers of intimacy and they are very frank and articulate in expressing their feelings.

10. Almansi and Henderson, p.25.

11. Ibid. p.46.

12. Ibid. p.36. The writers are comparing Pinter's style with those of Wesker and Owen.

13. John Simon, "Theatre Chronicle", Hudson Review, 30, no 1 (Spring 1977), p. 103.

14. Almansi and Henderson, p.77. The authors quote Collins English Dictionary.

15."Pinter's Problem", cited by Simon, p. 102.

16. Simon, p.102.

17. Weightman, p. 24.

18. Ibid. p.26.

19. Benedict Nightingale, "Inaction Replay", New Statesman, 89, 2 May 1975, p. 601.

20. Almansi and Henderson, p.91.

21. Deirdre Bair, Samuel Beckett: A Biography (London: Picador by Pan Books, 1980), p. 326.

22. Albert Hunt, "Pinter and Coward", New Society, Vol. 36, 24 June 1976, p.696.

23. "Harold Pinter: an Interview", Paris Review, 10, Number 20 (Fall 1966), p. 34; cited in Gale, p. 176.

24. P. 25.

25. P. 102.

26. Noel Coward, Plays, Vol. III (London : Eyre Methuen, 1979), pp. 101 & 103.

CHAPTER SIX

BETRAYAL AND MONOLOGUE

Playwrights often have good listening ears for the advice they receive from critics. After the television production of The Collection, a critic in The Times Literary Supplement directed Pinter's attention to some of the hidden talent of which he had not at that time made good use. "Perhaps Mr Pinter", this critic suggested, "should try his hand at marital comedy sometime --- he clearly has a feeling for such familiar domestic states as armed neutrality, peaceful co-existence and the balance of power which should stand him in good stead should he ever be moved to give his own version of Private Lives and George and Margaret".[1] Indeed the playwright wrote a number of family-life plays after The collection: The Lover, Tea Party, The Homecoming, Landscape and Old Times. Yet none of these plays could be categorised as a comedy with the exception perhaps of The Lover, which, however, because of its compact structure, does not allow for the comic situations that are usually

found in extended family-plays. The marital comedy this critic had suggested did not appear until after the difficult experience of No Man's Land. After this play another critic gave him another piece of advice. Seeing the impasse Pinter had put himself into, in No Man's Land, Benedict Nightingale surveyed Pinter's output in order to detect the playwright's point of dramatic strength. He found out that there were two different Pinters before No Man's Land: "We met Pinter the zoologist in The Caretaker and The Homecoming, plays of collision and conflict; we endured Pinter the lyric poet in Landscape and Silence, plays of uneventful reverie. Myself," he added, "I greatly prefer the first of these two gentlemen, because he writes drama, while the second seems incapable of much more than nostalgic recitative."[2] Pinter must surely have read this evaluation and been amused, as he probably had been amused before when Irving Wardle first discovered the animal image in his plays.[3] Betrayal (1978), the play he wrote after No Man's Land, is, indeed, a return to the subject of the animal in man, of the fall of man into the pit of lust and of the way in which he behaves because of this fall. Moreover, the playwright playfully responds to Nightingale's terminology and makes Jerry, the anti-hero in the world of romanticism and passion, tell Emma, his unfaithful lover,

that "his son wants to be a zoologist"(VI, 162). It seems that the playwright is telling Nightingale that this aspect of human life is everlasting, children carry on the same practices as their parents. Even at a very early age the question of sex arises, as the funny discussion in the fourth scene suggests: boy babies cry more than girl babies because they become anxious after leaving the womb! In addition to the centrality of the theme of the strength of the sex motive in the behaviour of the characters, in this particular play Pinter has changed his previous strategy, and the result, as will be seen, is an advanced step in Pinter's attempt at writing a memorable version of marital comedy. Pinter has partially fulfilled the wish of The Times Literary Supplement critic and has written a contemporary version, not of Noel Coward's Private Lives or Gerald Savory's George and Margaret (1937), but rather of Terence Rattigan's The Browning Version.

Unlike No Man's land, Betrayal conforms reasonably closely to the rules of literary realism: there is observation, some depiction of emotions and character, reasonable exposition of cause and effect and a good degree of resemblance to life. Yet, by comparison with other realists, Pinter tends to see more of the evil in man than

the good and human. This is not peculiar to Pinter. It is one of the trends of the age and anti-theatre has, as has been seen, contributed to creating this pessimistic aspect of life.

The theme of Betrayal relates it to one of Rattigan's most successful plays: The Browning Version. The comparison and contrast of the two plays which follows is aimed to show the new mood Pinter has contributed to British realism, thirty years after Rattigan's play. Robert in Betrayal and Andrew Crocker-Harris in The Browning Version are cuckolded by intimate friends. Both men betray these friends and hide the secret of the exposure of the affair for a long time: six months in the case of Harris and four years in the case of Robert --- a clear development in the ability of the man of the 1970s to prolong the secrecy. When confrontation finally takes place between the cuckolded husband and his rival, the latter discovers that he has also been cheated by the woman. In The Browning Version Frank's advice to his friend brings a shock to him and to the audience.

FRANK: Leave your wife.

Pause. Andrew takes a sip of his sherry.

ANDREW: (At length). So that you may the more easily carry on your intrigue with her?

Frank stares at him, then comes back into the room.

FRANK. How long have you known that?
ANDREW: Since it first began.
FRANK: How did you find out?
ANDREW: By information.
FRANK: By whose information?
ANDREW: By someone's whose word I could hardly discredit.[4]

In Pinter's play the situation is similar but the betrayal is revealed in two stages. First, in scene I, Jerry is told by Emma that she confessed to her husband the night before, and then, the next day, when Jerry apologizes for what has happened the husband gives shocking details:

> [...] She didn't tell me about you and her last night. She told me about you and her four years ago.
> Pause
>
> So she didn't have to tell me again last night. Because I knew. And she knew I knew because she told me herself four years ago.(IV, 181-182)

Both Harris and Robert disclose more about the betrayal of their women right after their confrontation with their unfaithful friends. The former tells Frank Hunter: "You mustn't flatter yourself you are the first. My information is a good deal better than yours, you understand. It's authentic"(p. 43). The latter tells Jerry: "I bumped into

Casey the other day. I believe he's having an affair with my wife. We haven't played squash for years, Casey and me. We used to have a damn good game"(IV, 187). (The subtext here is a Pinterian particularity. Rattigan's play does have some playful and amusing ironical statements but not of the same sophistication.) By contrast, the character of Harris is much more effective than Robert's. Pinter gives more attention to the unfaithful friend than to the cuckolded husband and leaves the latter's behaviour expressed in mere symbols. By giving a balanced attention to both Hunter and Harris, Rattigan gives his play a deeper human depth. The cuckolded husband tells us that because he and Millie have a different attitude towards love, their situation is inevitable:

> The love we should have borne each other has turned to bitter hatred. That's all the problem is. Not a very unusual one, I venture to think -- nor nearly as tragic as you seem to imagine. Merely the problem of an unsatisfied wife and a henpecked husband. You'll find it all over the world. It is usually, I believe, a subject for farce.(P. 45)

The tragic and the comic are cleverly interwoven in Rattigan's play while Pinter seems only concerned about light comedy. He does not want the audience to identify with Robert; he wants instead to keep him a mere comic

figure. This fact perhaps explains why he makes him almost dry of any emotions. When Jerry, the more human figure, is anxious to know if Robert is going to reveal the secret to Judith, Jerry's wife, Robert resorts to preaching:

> [...] You don't seem to understand. You don't seem to understand that I don't give a shit about any of this. It's true I've hit Emma once or twice. But that wasn't to defend a principle. I wasn't inspired to do it from any kind of moral standpoint. I just felt like giving her a good bashing. The old itch ... you understand.(IV, 185)

At only one place in the play does Robert weaken. This is when he asks his wife about the duration of the betrayal:

> ROBERT: How long?
> EMMA: Some time.
> ROBERT: Yes, but how long exactly?
> EMMA: Five years.
> ROBERT: Five years?
> Pause
> Ned is one year old.
> Pause
> Did you hear what I said?(IV, 223-4)

At the end of the same scene, however, Robert regains his control over his emotions and tells his wife: "Tell me, are you looking forward to our trip to Torcello?" (IV, 225) Robert is like many previous creations of Pinter, an unfathomable character. Such meagre analysis of Robert's character has probably made Irving Wardle notice that the

characters "seem curiously anaesthetized against common human feelings".[5]It also has made Ronald Hayman feel that the play remains lacking in "psychological analysis and explanation".[6] The remarks of these two critics direct attention to the requirements of the realistic approach. Pinter has here used the freedom of anti-theatre against a realistic background to the disadvantage of that background. If the theatre is only entertainment, Robert's behaviour is very funny, but if the play is a literary mirror of life, then there is something missing from the play. To give a balanced picture, Pinter ought to have entered into the mind of Robert as he has done in the case of Jerry and Emma.

There are also other problems about Robert's character. His relationship with Jerry is not very clear. There is a hint at the possibility of a homosexual relationship between the two men. When Robert knows that his wife has betrayed him with Jerry for five years, he tells her at the end of their frank exchanges:

> I've always liked Jerry. To be honest, I've always liked him rather more than I've liked you. Maybe I should have had an affair with him myself.(IV, 225)

There is another hint in the play that makes the animal image of both Robert and Jerry more probable. At the end of

the play, "Jerry moves to Robert and holds his elbow [... and Robert] clasps Jerry's shoulder". This is interpreted by Hayman as a "kind of rivalry to betray each other in making love to Emma".[7] These hints contribute well to the ambience of betrayal in the play: in the world of intrigue everything is possible.

Emma and Jerry are less sophisticated than Robert. Emma is stronger than Jerry and in fact is one of the few women in Pinter's plays who has a strong character. She resembles Ruth of The Homecoming, who knows that men think of their physical pleasure and thus reacts by seeking her own. At the end of her adventure with Jerry she tells him her real feelings about the flat that was their meeting place:

> EMMA: It was never intended to be the same kind of home. Was it?
> Pause
>
> You didn't ever see it as a home, in any case, did you?
> JERRY: No, I saw it as a flat ... you know.
> EMMA: For fucking.
> JERRY: No, for loving. (IV, 197)

Emma's behaviour can be seen as a reaction to the indifference of her husband, as suggested in the last scene and by the fact that she betrayed him for five years without

him being able to know about it. When Emma finds Jerry less enthusiastic about continuing their affair, or when she feels that he has become older, she shifts to Casey. Considering these elements the audience can identify with her more than the flat character of Millie in The Browning Version.

Speaking of Emma, the last major female figure in Pinter's output, it is worth noting here that there is something peculiar about Pinter's image of women. His world is, generally speaking, dominated by men. When he wants to tackle very serious matters, he either gives women secondary roles, as Meg's role in The Birthday Party, or creates an all-male play. Only in very few plays do women have equal footing with men: The Lover, Old Times and Betrayal. Generally speaking, when women appear in his plays they take one of two roles: the old ones are nagging wives(Rose in The Room), or nagging mothers or mother-like figures(Meg in The Birthday Party, the two aunts in Night School, and the mothers in Night Out and Family Voices); and the young ones are either whores, seekers of passing pleasure or obsessed with sex (Lulu in The Birthday Party, Flora in A Slight Ache, Sally in Night School, Stella in The Collection, Sarah in The Lover, Ruth in The Homecoming, Jane in The Basement

and Wendy in Tea Party). Women of complicated situations like Hester of The Deep Blue Sea and Winnie in Happy Days are missing from his drama. He surely needs to go beyond the zoo image in order to create tragic female figures as he has created Stanley and Davies.

The irony of Jerry's situation is more revealing than that of Frank Hunter: Jerry is a romantic lover in a world of complicated betrayals and intrigues. He is a simpleton in sophisticated surroundings. The play implies that this type of romantic love is outdated when betrayal becomes common and shared by everybody, as the play shows. Even the off-stage character Casey is included in the betrayal. Jerry's situation is funny because he thinks he is "brilliant"(IV, 169), while, in fact, he is still uninitiated into the depth of the game. Unlike Hunter who shows firm personality when he tells Millie that he only betrayed Harris "twice in six months -- at [her] urgent invitation"(P.40), Jerry still speaks of love even after the relationship has ended(IV, 174). However, there is only one episode which is repeated by Emma and Jerry: the latter's lifting and throwing in the air of Robert's thirteen year old daughter, Charlotte. This strange episode and its repetition several times in the play suggest that Charlotte

is Jerry's daughter, and in this case the whole play is a type of game played by the author against the audience, since from the play we understand that the liaison started after Jerry made a pass at Emma in a party in Robert's house only nine years before. It is a trace of the obfuscation of anti-theatre that has become a convention in Pinter's theatre.

The freedom Pinter bestowed on the characters of Betrayal has not given them a better chance of becoming heroes in the traditional sense. The trio in Betrayal are anti-heroes because they are shown to be the slaves of their lust and passion. With the absence of the hero in most contemporary drama, one wonders what examples the coming generations will find in contemporary art.

Pinter's understatements are very impressive in Betrayal because of the clarity of the exposition. These understatements are interwoven with the plot of the play and are not like those in No Man's Land, mere language games. For instance, in scene IV, Robert, whom we know to have been aware of the betrayal of his wife and his friend, mentions in front of the ignorant friend and the unfaithful wife that: "Once when we were all having dinner, I remember, you, me, Emma and Judith, where was it, Emma gave a

dissertation over the pudding about dishonesty in Casey with reference to his last novel, 'Drying Out'"(IV, 207). The word dishonesty is revealing. Casey, whom we know to be involved in a love affair with Emma, is considered by Robert to be "a brutally honest squash player"(IV, 208). The understatement in this scene reaches a climax when the challenge between Robert and Jerry to a game of squash is introduced. Emma wants to watch the game but Robert tells her:

> Well, to be brutally honest, we wouldn't actually want a woman around, would we, Jerry?. I mean a game of squash is not simply a game of squash, it's rather more than that. You see, first there's the game. And there's the shower. And there's the pint. And there is lunch. After all, you've been at it. You've had your battle. What you want is your pint and your lunch. You really don't want a woman buying you lunch. You don't actually want a woman within a mile of the place, any of the places, really. You don't want her in the squash court, you don't want her in the shower, or the pub, or the restaurant. You see, at lunch you want to talk bout squash, or cricket, or books, or even women, with your friend, and be able to warm to your theme without fear of improper interruption. That's what it's all about.(IV, 209-210)

The audience understands well the hidden meanings in Robert's assault on women. At the end of the scene Robert kisses Emma and she cries. Does she know more than we do about the relationship between the two men, or is squash, as

Almansi and Henderson have suggested, more important than love?[8]

Likewise the humour in the play fits in with the action more than in the episodic structure of No Man's Land. The return to realism gives a better chance for the jokes to be part of the situation. In scene V, for example, the situation is very comic . Robert discovers that his wife has betrayed him and is shocked to know that she has betrayed him for five years:

> ROBERT: [...] Ned is one year old.
> Pause
> Did You hear what I said?
> EMMA: He is your son. Jerry was in America. For two months.
> Silence
> ROBERT: Did he write to you from America?
> EMMA: Of course. And I wrote to him.
> ROBERT: Did you tell him that Ned had been conceived?
> EMMA: Not by the letter.(IV, 224)

Of course the baby was not conceived through correspondence! There is another joke about this baby later in the play. "I'm pregnant", Emma tells her lover, "It was when you were in America. Pause. It wasn't anyone else. It was my husband"(IV, 262). Again the jokes about the game of squash when Jerry blames Robert for hiding the secret are more dramatic than using the woman as a cricket ball in No Man's

Land:

> JERRY: But we have seen each other ... a great deal ... over the last four years ... We've had lunch.
> ROBERT: Never played squash though.(IV, 183)

The reverse-in-time structure of the play is not a new technique. Beckett has used it in Krapp and Stoppard has used it in Artist Descending a Staircase. Pinter has written two screenplays for novels concerned with the influence of the past in the present: The Go-Between and The Proust Screenplay. Bernard Dukore has rightly observed the influence of cinema and The Proust Screenplay, in particular, in making him choose the reversed order.[9] What is relevant to us here is that time is used as an element in the drama in a traditional way. Time in this play changes the characters and reveals their unsettled relationships. The change in place also is another traditional element that helps in creating the atmosphere of the narrative. Time and place have not been, together, such effective elements in any of his previous works. Tradition has finally found firm ground in Pinter's drama.

With all these traditional elements of drama the play can be seen as a well-made play. In fact most of Pinter's plays are well structured, but this play is particularly well developed. Every scene has a specific purpose and is linked with the others: scene I reveals Emma's betrayal; scene II reveals Robert's and Emma's double betrayal to Jerry; scene III shows the end of the love affair between Emma and Jerry; scene IV depicts the sophisticated personality of Robert; scene V shows the confrontation between husband and wife; scene VI shows how Emma faced her lover with lies after their exposure; scene VII exposes these lies; scene VIII exposes the mood of infidelity between the lovers even at an early stage of their affair; and, finally, scene IX recollects the initial signs of the affair.

Betrayal differs from The Browning Version since Rattigan's play is about people the author knew during his life and can also be seen as an expression of his own state of despair,[10] while Pinter's play is not autobiographical, although it has a biographical structure. The situations in the play are conceived for theatrical aim. Pinter, it seems, has become tired of the autobiographical writing which had some influence on his early plays. In this play

Pinter makes Robert express a dissatisfaction with such type of writing: Casey lives round the corner

> Writing a novel about a man who leaves his wife and three children and goes to live alone on the other side of London to write a novel about a man who leaves his wife and three children-(IV, 206)

The theatricality of Betrayal is easier to digest than the rich food of The Browning Version: simple forms of art with a light entertainment content have become more popular in the age of complications and technology. Is this the reason why Pinter after Betrayal has not written any really long plays? Or does he share with Robert a hatred of contemporary literature, "books, to be more precise prose. Or to be even more precise, modern prose, I mean modern novels"(IV, 249). Pinter's latest short plays are more poetic than narrative. They could be preludes to another major work, as has happened before in his career. But one wonders what type of work it will be.

* * *

Like Landscape and Silence, Monologue is Beckettian in form, yet in content it evokes Rattigan. New in this play is Pinter's use of the one-actor form which Beckett has used in plays like Not I and Eh Joe, but the mood Pinter's play communicates is different from those of Beckett's plays. It is a play of character but thinned out so as to fulfil Mallarme's dream of the one-actor performance and Maeterlinck's and Beckett's static drama.[11] It is a new successful experiment with which Pinter has added a new formal dimension to the British tradition. Form and content are in harmony in this short play: the one-actor structure reveals the loneliness of the character, the content supports it.

The Speaker in Monologue is not like the speakers in Beckett's plays who fight against the intruders in their minds. He is a man who knows himself and who addresses a friend whose memory is evoked by an empty chair. Again, the emptiness of the chair is not existential or philosophical, as one might expect with Ionesco's chairs in mind but rather a psychological one.

The play is a self-defining one, although it is very compact. Two white men, one of whom is the speaker, fall in love with a black girl, who falls for the second man. There is some kind of betrayal as in Betrayal, but the emotions displayed in the play are much deeper. As the speaker recollects his loss of his "ebony"(IV, 272) lover and his friend, we identify with him, a rare feeling towards a Pinterian character. He blames his luck for the loss. "I know you were much more beautiful than me"(IV, 273). At first the girl was his date, for she was with him when she was in her woollen dress and the weather changed. Like the change in the weather, the change in love comes suddenly and is unpredictable."She cried. You jumped up like a ... those things, forget the name, monkey on a box, jack in a box, held her hand, made her tea, a rare burst. Perhaps the change in the weather had gone to your head"(IV, 273). The type of love also does not explain this change: whether he loved her body or whether he loved her soul as his friend has done is not of importance. "My spasms could be your spasms. Who is to tell or care? Pause Well ... she did ... can ... could ..."(IV, 274). The moment the "ebony" girl chose his friend still has a deep impact on the speaker:

> Touch my body, she said to you. You did. Of course you did. You'd be a bloody fool if you didn't. You'd have been a bloody fool if you hadn't. It was perfectly normal. (IV, 274)

After this the speaker admits his defeat: "I brought her to you, after you'd pissed off to live in Notting Hill Gate" (IV, 274). Being defeated he can do nothing but justify things to himself: "The ones that keep silent are the best off"(IV, 275). Now that he is alone, the speaker remembers his beautiful moments of he past with a mixture of feelings: on the one hand he envies his friend for his chance, and on the other he yearns for a reunion with him. "I feel for you. Even if you feel nothing ... for me. I feel for you, old chap"(IV, 275). After a pause, he reconsiders this exposure and tries to keep some dignity. He describes himself as a vigilant man who does not fall easily: "I am way past mythologies, left them all behind, cocoa, sleep, Beethoven, cats, rain, black girls, bosom pals, literature, custard"(IV, 276). The passages of the play are separated by pauses to reveal changes in emotions and changes in the ideas that come to the mind of the speaker. As an indication that the speaker has come to a critical point, a climax in his remembrances, the following passage is followed by a silence.

> What you are in fact witnessing is freedom. I no longer participate in holy ceremony. The crap is cut.
> Silence (IV, 276)

This is perhaps the furthest reach of justification that he can concoct, and the long silence is needed by him to consider the situation further. After the silence we discover that the excuses have not worked, for he returns to his confusion. First he wishes that his rival has a black colour in a way that recalls the envy of Genet's characters in The Blacks. The speaker probably wishes his rival was black in order to make himself accepted as a change of face for his ebony lady.

> You should have had a black face, that was your mistake. You could have made a going concern out of it, you could have chalked it up in the book, you could have had two black kids.
> pause(IV, 276)

Because that is impossible, all he can wish for now is a reunion with the potential children of the missing couple:

> I'd have died for them.
> Pause
>
> I'd have been their uncle.
> Pause

I'm their uncle.
Pause

I'm your children's uncle.
Pause

I'll take them out, tell them jokes.
Pause

I love your children. (IV, 276-7)

The theme of emotional loneliness in the play recalls that of Rattigan's Table by the Window. The speaker's situation can be compared to that of Miss Cooper's with only one difference: the latter speaks about her emotions to real people and not to a chair. Miss Cooper has found in John Malcolm the person who can, for the time being, fill her loneliness. But she is the type of person who knows how to live "alone", as Miss Mecham tells her. When John's ex-wife appears from nowhere, Miss Cooper at first puts obstacles between John and Anne. Later, she reconsiders her position, admits her defeat, and does her best to reconcile the husband and his wife. In both plays friendship comes before the mere physical needs. For the first time in Pinter's plays love and friendship are allowed to speak out without the impediments of masked personalities.

This is an interesting development in Pinter's drama. "Such open display of emotions", writes Bernard Dukore, "is uncommon in the Pinter canon. But the speaker is safe in dropping his mask and revealing his solitude, emptiness and vulnerability. He confronts only an empty chair. He is utterly alone".[12] Dukore's argument is true, yet at the same time one can use it to show that the author can find ways of displaying emotions. In Betrayal, as we have seen, Jerry and Emma display their feelings. There is also an emotional situation in A Kind of Alaska, especially in the televised version[13] of the play, where Pauline's tears come down for the first time in a Pinter play.

Rattigan in 1948 forecast the development of short plays[14] and introduced short plays for the first time in his playbill, The Browning Version and Harlequinade, and in other double-bills. Rattigan's prophecy was fulfilled when Beckett began to introduce his short anti-plays. Taking from these two different playwrights, Pinter has shown great ability to compress the emotions of Rattigan's melodrama to a minimum. The quick snack of Rattigan's Table by the Window has been reduced to a quick sandwich in Pinter's Monologue.

Notes

1. [Anonymous], "Ambiguity", 12 May 1961, p. 269.

2. "Inaction Replay", New Statesman, 89, 2 May 1975, p. 601.

3 See Chapter Four of this thesis, p. 143.

4. Terence Rattigan, The Browning Version and Harlequinade(London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980), pp. 42-43. Hereafter page numbers will be cited in the text.

5. "Pinter, Master of Ambiguity, Offers a Blank Endorsement of the Obvious", The Times, 16 November 1978, p. 11.

6. Harold Pinter, Fourth Ed. (London: Heinemann, 1980), p. 165.

7. Ibid. p. 105.

8. Guido Almansi and Simon Henderson,Harold Pinter, (London and New York: Methuen, 1983), p. 94.

9. Bernard Dukore, Harold Pinter (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982), p. 107.

10. See Michael Darlow and Gillian Hodson, Terence Rattigan: The Man and his Work(London, Melbourne & New York: Quartet Books, 1979), pp. 152-4. The authors consider the idea of hiding the betrayal comes from Rattigan's hidden fears of exposure of his homosexual relationships.

11. See Chapter One, pp. 4-6; and Chapter Two, pp. 21-22, of this thesis.

12. Bernard Dukore, Harold Pinter, p. 101.

13. The play was shown on ITV on 17 December 1984. In the text, however, there is no reference to tears by the author.

14. Michael Darlow and Gillian Hodson, Terence Rattigan: The Man and his Work, p. 150.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FIVE RECENT WORKS

Although Pinter has written only five short works since 1978, these short works have added new dimensions to his output. In the triple-bill, Other Places, he has written his first completely realistic play, A Kind of Alaska; and in the remaining two works, the sketch Precisely and the short play One for the Road, the playwright, for the first time, has directly shared in contemporary political issues.

The common theme of the triple-bill, Other Places, is the inability of the mind to adjust to the world. In A Kind of Alaska Deborah wakes up from twenty nine years of sleeping sickness, at the age of forty-five, with the mind and emotions of a girl of sixteen; in Victoria Station the taxi-driver has lost his memory in the streets of London; and in Family Voices the young man has lost contact with his

family as he has fallen, helplessly, in the hands of a group of queer strangers. The first of these three short plays is a novelty in every aspect, not only in this triple-bill, but in Pinter's output as a whole.

- I -

A Kind of Alaska is not only realistic in the sense that every character impersonates an experience from life, it is also based on a clinical reality. As an introduction to the play, the author acknowledges that it is "inspired by Oliver Sacks' Awakenings" and gives some information about encephalitis lethargica, the epidemic that put millions of people into states of prolonged sleep in the second decade of this century. This source of inspiration does not belittle the artistic value of the play; on the contrary, it gives it a deeper value. The interesting thing about this new approach is that it has finally given the playwright a means of capturing with success the theme that he has tried to convey in No Man's Land: the stasis of the

human situation. Without resorting to Beckett's symbolism and to his philosophical reductionism of human existence to its elements, Pinter has conveyed a similar message from life itself. The reality of the situation in Pinter's play gives it different shades of meaning from the situations in Beckett's plays. Deborah's experience evokes in the mind a comparison between the reality of our life and the dream-like world of sleep and death. At the same time the care of Dr. Hornby and of Pauline, Deborah's sister, are clear signs of human compassion that are stronger than those found in Beckett's plays.

Pinter makes a comprehensive study of sleep as a kind of death. He depicts an imaginary and impressive picture of the other places that the mind visits in sleep and shows that the idea of death, as represented by the long sleep of Deborah, is a torment to those who are aware of it: "You see", Dr. Hornby tells Deborah, "you have been nowhere, absent, indifferent. It is we who have suffered."[1] At the end of the play Deborah shows some understanding of this reality. She realises that her family and friends have suffered more than she has suffered and so the play ends on her two words of gratitude:"thank you".

The play beautifully depicts the human situation through exposing the mysteries in life and death. Why do we have to face the endless sleep and consequently the endless waiting? There is no answer to this question, as the play suggests:

> DEBORAH: [...] I've obviously committed a criminal offence and am now in prison. I'm quite prepared to face up to the facts. But what offence? I can't imagine what offence it could be. I mean one that would bring ... such a terrible sentence.
> HORNBY: This is not a prison. You have committed no offence.
> DEBORAH: But what have I done? What have I been doing? Where have I been?
> HORNBY: Do you remember nothing of where you have been? Do you remember nothing ... of all that has happened to you?
> DEBORAH: Nothing has happened to me. I have been nowhere.(17)

Before the end of the play Pinter describes with impressive images the prison of sleep or death that is inevitable:

> Do you hear a drip?
> Pause
>
> I hear a drip. Someone's left the tap on.
> Pause
>
> I'll tell you what it is. It is a vast series of halls. With enormous windows masquerading as walls. The windows are mirrors, you see. And so glass reflects glass. For ever and ever.
> Pause

> You can't imagine how still it is. So silent I hear my eyes move.
> Silence
>
> I'm lying in bed. People bend over me, speak to me. I want to say hello, to have a chat, to make some inquiries. But you can't do that if you're in a vast hall of glass with a tap dripping. (38-39)

The idea of communication between conscious and unconscious people, the dead and the living, is haunting Pinter in this play and in Family Voices. In the latter Pinter makes the dead father speak and tell us that he hears the prayers of his son. As a technique, however, the speaking of the dead was used by Beckett in Play, where the three dead characters continue the search for the self in their tombs.

In A Kind of Alaska life is depicted as a mixture of dream and reality, "lies and truths" as Hornby puts it, when Pauline asks him what to tell her sister. The difference between dream and reality is proportional to the difference between Deborah's sleep and the journey of the rest of the family. At the end of the play Deborah sums up the proportional difference by making a contrast:

> You say I have been asleep. You say I am now awake. You say I have not awoken from the dead. You say I was not dreaming then and am not dreaming now. You say I have always been alive and am alive now. You say I am a woman.

She looks at Pauline, then back to Hornby.

> She is a widow. She doesn't go to her ballet classes any more. Mummy and daddy and Estelle are on a world cruise. They've stopped off in Bangkok. It'll be my birthday soon. I think I have the matter in proportion.(40)

When the general belief is that life has no purpose and meaning, the difference between being in a state of encephalitis lethargica and being in the outside world is not significant. In either case man is caught between life and death.

The language of the play is rich in imagery. Without any obliquity, the picture of static life is conveyed. Stasis is expressed through its opposite. For instance, Deborah tells us that she dances in her sleep

> in very narrow spaces[...] The most crushing spaces. The most punishing spaces. That was tough going. Very difficult. Like dancing with someone on your foot all the time, I mean all the time, on the same spot, just slam, slam, a big boot on your foot.(24-5)

Again the description of the suffocating silence behind "the vast series of windows masquerading as walls", where one can hear the movement of one's eyes, is also very impressive.

As with Beckett, Pinter's beautiful language helps him in conveying dramatic situations without using much action.

But Pinter's language, as said before, takes a dramatic direction that is different from Beckett's. In A Kind of Alaska the beautiful expressions also reveal character. Deborah speaks in the language of an adolescent girl: she thinks that there is a long life ahead of her; she is still anxious to quarrel with her sisters; she speaks of a boyfriend, Jack, whom she once saw crying "for love"(16), and of another boy, Peter, with whom she plays "cowboys and Indians"(20). Her reaction to her presence with a stranger displays a mixture of life-like language and artistic expressions.

> You've had your way with me. You made me touch you. You stripped me. I cried ... but ... but it was my lust made me cry. You are a devil. My lust was my own. I kept it by me. You took it from me. Once open never closed. Never closed again.[...] Terrible. You have ruined me.(12)

When the idea of the injection is introduced, Pinter makes full use of it to create a comic relief:

> HORNBY: I woke you with an injection.
> DEBORAH: Lovely injection. Oh how I love it. And am I beautiful?
> HORNBY: Certainly.

DEBORAH: And You are my Prince Charming. Aren't you?
Pause

Oh speak up.
Pause

Silly shit. All men are alike.
Pause

I think I love you.(19-20)

Hornby's language also suits his position. He is a doctor who wants to know everything about the mysterious case he is treating. When Deborah asks him: "Was I dreaming?", he answers her with a question: "Were you?"(22) Similarly Pauline's sentences convey her perplexity at speaking to her sister after such a long time. Her story of the family's world cruise is realistic and dramatic at the same time: she hides some of the facts about the changes to the family during Deborah's sleep and at the same time she shows that life is nothing but an illusory journey like that of Pauline's family.

Thematically and artistically A Kind of Alaska has the required elements for a lasting piece of art. It reflects with depth the contemporary pessimistic view of life. The play suggests that it is better for a realist like Pinter to

search for images from life and its rich experiences. Symbolic writing -- as in the case of Beckett, for example --- demands philosophical arguments and abstractions that lead most of the time away from the real experiences of life which Pinter is fond of creating.

- II -

Victoria Station is more of a sketch than a play because of the lightness of its content. It is a comic short piece about a driver who seems either drunk or in a temporary state of amnesia. The choice of London as a place for communicating this state of mind is very successful. The stress on the people of a big city is enormous and the mental states of both the driver and the controller aptly reflect a picture of the crowded life of London.

The piece makes good comic use of the driver's forgetfulness -- an old theme for comedy. "Victoria what?"(47) he asks when the controller enquires from him whether he is near that station. The driver only knows that

he is beside a dark park. He remembers that it is called Crystal Palace only when the controller mentions the name. The climax of this funny situation comes when the driver suddenly remembers that he has got a passenger in the car:

> DRIVER: Oh by the way, there is something I forgot to tell you.
> CONTROLLER: What is it?
> DRIVER: I've got a P.O.B.
> CONTROLLER: You've got a P.O.B.?
> DRIVER: Yes. That means passenger on board.(56)

This passenger, the driver later confesses, is a girl. It seems that she has made him forget himself. He forgets that he has a wife and a daughter and decides to die with the girl in the car. The reactions of the controller to the driver's loss of memory are also comic. At the end of the play he decides to close the office to congratulate the driver on his new love. Ironically, at this moment, the driver regains some of his sobriety and tells him:

> Fine. But what about this man coming off the train at Victoria station --- the 10.22 from Boulogne?
> CONTROLLER: He can go and fuck himself.(61)

In addition to its comic mood, the play touches upon the theme of the alienated and confused man. The driver is not called by his name but by a number. The controller who directs him from behind the electric machine assumes a divine assignment:

> [...] I'm just talking into this machine, trying to make some sense out of our lives. That is my function. God gave me this job. He asked me to do this job, personally. I'm your local monk, 274. I'm a monk. You follow? I lead a restricted life.(50)

When the controller decides to look for another driver, the driver responds in a way similar to the clowns in Godot: "Don't leave me [...] please. Don't leave me"(53-54). Again when the controller tries to leave him for the second time, the driver keeps his walkie-talkie on the air:

> CONTROLLER: [...] Where the fuck is 135? 246? 178? 101? Will somebody help me? Where's everyone gone? I've got a good job going down to to Cuckfield. Can anyone hear me?
> DRIVER: I can hear you.
> CONTROLLER: Who's that?
> Driver: 274. Here. Waiting. What do you want me to do?(55)

The driver is like Beckett's characters in Godot waiting for orders from outside.

This comedy of a realistic situation is, therefore, written in the spirit of the age. When there is mental confusion each individual lives or tries to live on a plane of reality of his own. The unity between the individual and his surroundings has been shattered and the mind lives in places which the individual does not know.

- III -

Family Voices brings us back to Pinter's familiar territory: the creation of a bizarre ambience against a realistic background. The seriousness of A Kind of Alaska and the light comedy of Victoria Station are fused together in this play in such a way that it is difficult to know whether it is a comedy or a tragedy. The play is also distinguished for its beautiful language that sometimes becomes poetic, especially in depicting emotional feelings. Yet in its imagery the play has some weaknesses.

Like Landscape and Silence, Family Voices is Beckettian in its form. The play also evokes Beckett in its suggestion that the three voices of the young man, his mother, and his father are only voices in the mind of one character. The idea of speaking from the dead, as mentioned before, is reminiscent of Beckett's Play. Moreover, the overall impression one gets from Family Voices resembles the feeling of loneliness and fear of the world that one gets from Beckett's or Ionesco's drama.

The emotional situation Pinter creates from the image of the separated and disintegrated family is perhaps more impressive than the symbolic feeling of loneliness in Beckett's play. It is stirring to hear the mother's calls for her son to go back to her and to hear of the bitterness of the father who has died without seeing his son. It is also thrilling to share with Voice One his fears of the mysterious people of the house and of their visitors at night. Yet the weakness of the play lies in the mother's announcement that her son has "never possessed any strength of character whatsoever and that [he is] palpably susceptible to even the most blatant form of flattery and blandishment"(IV, 295). This hint at the young man's mental disability distorts the serious presentation of the themes

of loneliness and the disintegration of family life. It makes the imagery of the play fall beneath the Beckettian level of the intellectual anti-hero and comes closer to the level of Ionesco's dupes of The Bald Prima Donna. Without the mother's affidavit we would have an image of man who has only the ability to see surface reality, but her announcement tends to make the play no more than the comic exposition of a mental case.

This weakness of the play becomes clear when we study the two types of character Voice One displays. On one side his character supports what the mother claims. His mental abilities are limited to description and he cannot analyze his situation in abstract terms. He has no initiative and is not ready to react against any external intervention in his life. He tells us, for example, that his mother and sister came to search for him in the house where he lives, but he did not do anything to see them, although, as we understand from him at the end of the play, he badly needs their help. He narrates the following strange story in the language of a child:

> I was lying in my bath when the door opened. I thought I had locked it. My name's Riley, he said, how's the bath? Very nice, I said. You've got a wellknit yet slender frame, he said, I thought you only a snip, I thought you only a snip, I never

> imagined you would be as wellknit and slender as I now see you are. Oh thank you, I said. Don't thank me, he said, It's God you have to thank. Or your mother. I've just dismissed a couple of imposters at the front door. We'll get no more shit from that quarter. He then sat on the edge of the bath and recounted to me what I've just recounted to you.
>
> It interests me that my father wasn't bothered to make the trip.(IV, 289)

This last sentence reveals another aspect of this character. Even with his limited abilities, Voice One still wears the mask of the Pinterian character, and so he is not only a simpleton. "Even from the opening words, 'I am having a very nice time'", the critic David Wade has noticed, "it is impossible not to register a faint sense of disquiet, to entertain the suspicion that this banal utterance would turn out to mean something other than what it said."[2] Indeed, there is a hidden feeling that Voice One discloses more than the surface description of his situation. "Mother, Mother", Voice One recites in one of the passages:

> I've had the most unpleasant, the most mystifying encounter, with the man who calls himself Mr Withers. Will you give me your advice?
>
> Come in here, son, he called. Look sharp. Don't mess about.[...] You know where you are? he said. You're in my room. It's not Euston station. Get me? It's a true oasis. [...] This is a place for

> creatures, up and down stairs. Creatures of the rhythmic splits, the rhythmic sideswipes, the rum and the roulettes. [...](IV, 290-1)

Before the end of the play he reveals more of his hidden troubles: "But if you find me bewildered, anxious, confused, uncertain and afraid, you also find me content"(IV, 293). At the end he finally confesses that he wants to go back home. This scheming to hide his real feelings creates a picture of a man lost between his family and society, but the other aspect of his personality belittles this image. He does not represent such a complicated case as that of Deborah, who is described as "an extremely intelligent young girl"(p. 34), but shows a minor comic case of a mentally retarded person.

One of the merits of Family Voices lies in its reflecting on a number of problems that are worthy of attention: the disintegration of the family, the difficulty of communication between different generations, the presence of underground groups which criminally exploit young men, and corruption in authority. The play displays these problems without the traditional argumentative method. The situation itself speaks of these problems. Yet there is something dangerous in what the play suggests. This is

because Pinter mentions the police and the church by name when he is suggesting that there is corruption in society and he seems biased against these authorities. He makes Riley, who is a homosexual, as his intrusion on the young man suggests, a representative of both the police and the church. Riley tells Voice One:

> My lust is unimaginably violent but it goes against my best interests, which are to keep on the right side of God. I'm a big man as you see, I could crush a slip of a lad such as you to death, I mean the death that is love, the death I understand love to be. But meet it is that I keep those desires shackled in handcuffs and leg-irons. I'm good at that sort of thing because I'm a policeman by trade. And I'm highly respected in the force and in church. (IV, 292)

The weak aspect of the young man's character provides the play with suitable material for comedy. Voice One's description of the bath, for example, is very funny. Again his account of Mrs. Withers and Jane is very humorous. When he sits on a sofa and Jane stretches herself on it, he tells us that "her stockinged toes came to rest on [his] thigh. It wasn't the biggest sofa in the world." He is amazed at the way everybody eats buns. Jane, for instance,

> chewed almost dreamily at her bun and when a current was left stranded on her upper lip she licked it off, without haste. I could not reconcile this with

> the fact that her toes were quite restless, even agitated. Her mouth, eating, was measured, serene; her toes, not eating, were agitated, highly strung, some would say hysterical. My bun turned out to be rock solid. I bit into it, it jumped out of my mouth and bounced into my lap. Jane's feet caught it. It calmed her toes down. She juggled the bun, with some expertise, along them. I recalled that, in an early exchange between us, she had told me she wanted to be an acrobat. (IV, 287)

The play contains a number of such absurd episodes which are funny. Sometimes the language used by Voice One is comic. Enumerating the inhabitants of the house, he tells his mother:

> One man is an old man.
>
> The one who is an old man retires early. He is bald.
>
> The other is a woman who wears red dresses.
>
> The other one is another man.
>
> He is big. He is much bigger than the other man. His hair is black. He has black eyebrows and black hair on the back of his hands. (IV, 284-5)

The language of the play displays other merits as well. When emotions are involved the language becomes poetic. The last three passages of the play are good examples of this type of language. The mother and the son end their messages by asking rhetoric questions and the father sums up the mood of the play with rhymed sentences.

> VOICE TWO: I'll tell you what, my darling. I've given you up a very bad job. Tell me one last thing. Do you think the word love means anything?
> VOICE ONE: I am on my way back to you. I am about to make the journey back to you. What will you say to me?
> VOICE THREE: I have so much to say to you. But I am quit dead. What I have to say to you will never be said.(IV, 296)

- IV -

Pinter's last two works go beyond the formula that has been the subject of discussion in this thesis and represent a new development in Pinter's career. The first of these, Precisely, is a sketch that was staged at the Apollo Victoria in London on 18 December 1983 as part of a

programme organized by the Peace Movement; and the second is the short play *One for the Road*, first published in *The New York Review of Books* on 10 May 1984 as a contribution from the playwright to Amnesty International.[3]

Pinter, as has been seen, has been against any commitment in art to any political programme or system and his contribution to these two movements indicates a change in his artistic policy. These two works imply that the playwright now believes that man can do something about his situation, or at least he should try to do something. This is contrary to his previous strategy of showing man helpless against fearful and irresistible organizations. The depiction of evil in these two dramatic pieces becomes purposeful rather than a mere dramatic convention.

In fact this new commitment agrees with Pinter's hatred of war since his teens. When he was eighteen he refused to do National Service, on the grounds of his being a conscientous objector to war.[4] During the war in Vietnam he showed a violent reaction against politicians. He told Lawrence Bensky:

> I'll tell you what I really think about politicians. The other night I watched some politicians on television talking about Vietnam. I wanted very much to burst through the screen with a

> flame-thrower and burn their eyes out and their balls and then enquire from them then how would they assess this action from a political point of view.[5]

In Precisely Pinter shows a similar reaction against politicians, although this time he makes one of their representatives express it. "I'm going to recommend", Stephen tells Roger, "that they be hung, drawn and quartered. I wanted to see the colour of their entrails"(p.34). In the sketch, Stephen and Roger, the "brains" of the authorities, discuss the number of millions which, as the dialogue implies, would be affected by a nuclear war. There is a disagreement about the number, which some people -- to the funny disgust of Stephen --consider to be more than twenty millions, "fifty, sixty, seventy". "But that's almost the whole population!" Roger remarks. Authorities, the sketch suggests, play with the lives of people as if they are selling merchandise:

> ROGER: Give me another two, Stephen.
> Stephen stares at him.
> STEPHEN: Another two?
> ROGER: Another two million. And I'll buy you a drink. Another two for another drink.
> STEPHEN(slowly): No, no Roger. It's twenty million. Dead.

ROGER: You mean precisely?
STEPHEN: I mean dead. Precisely.(p. 34)

The pun on the word dead is very successful, and the play has a positive message, which is to say "no" to a nuclear war, despite the political argument about this issue. When man sees that the human race is on its way to extinction, he can no longer stay in a room and study himself. Pinter has left his room to add his voice to those who he thinks are right about an international problem.

- V -

One for the Road is an expressive protest against political torture. In a country --- probably one in Latin America --- a political prisoner, Victor, is severely tortured, his wife is raped, and his son is probably killed. Nicholas, a head executioner, gives us an idea about the conflict in that country. The rulers of the country are using religion as a means to counter-attack their enemies. Nicholas tells Victor:

> I run the place. God speaks through me. I'm referring to the Old Testament God, by the way, although I'm a long way from being Jewish.(p.9)

The play shows how crimes are committed in the name of religion. Nicholas is not a pious man but a soldier who benefits from his position in authority:

> Who would you prefer to be? You or me?
> Pause.
>
> I'd go for me if I were you. The trouble about you, although I grant your merits, is that you're on a losing wicket, while I can't put a foot wrong.(p.10)

Nicholas also does not show any mercy towards or respect for Victor's wife and asks her insolently:

> Have they been raping you?
> She stares at him.
>
> How many times?(11)

Religion to Nicholas is only a kind of business:

> Drink up. It'll put lead in your pencil. And then we'll find someone to take it out.
> He laughs
>
> We can do that, you know, we have a first-class brothel upstairs, on the sixth floor, chandeliers, the lot. They'll suck you in and blow you out in little bubbles. All volunteers. Their daddies are

> in our business. Which is, I remind you, to keep the world clean for God. Get me? (p. 11)

Precisely and One for the Road, however, are only publicity works and do not display dramatic depth. They, nevertheless, can provide the playwright with the dramatic material necessary for a profound work, if he chooses to develop this type of writing and move it from the general to the particular. Such a move, however, will demand great courage from a playwright who has accustomed himself to write implicit drama for more than a quarter of a century.

Notes

1. Harold Pinter, *Other Places: Three plays [A Kind of Alaska, Victoria Station and Family Voices]* (London: Methuen, 1982), p. 34. Hereafter page numbers will be cited in the text.

2. David Wade, "Family Voices", *The Times*, 23 January 1981, p. 11.

3. *Precisely* is published in the collection *The Big One*, "An Anthology of Original Sketches, Poems, Cartoons and Songs on the Theme of Peace", ed. by Susannah York and Bill Bachle (London: Methuen, 1984), pp. 32-35. The last page of *One for the Road* is printed next to a report of Amnesty International; see *The New York Review of Books*, 10 May 1984, pp. 9-11.

4. See Martin Esslin, *Pinter: A Study of his Plays*(London: Eyre Methuen, 1977), pp. 13-14.

5. Harold Pinter, interview with Lawrence M. Bensky, *The Paris Review*, X, no. 39, 1966, cited in Simon Trussler, *The Plays of Harold Pinter*(London: Victor Gollancz, 1973), p. 44.

CONCLUSION

TOWARDS A GREATER REALISM

As the reader might have noticed, a study of the different influences on Harold Pinter's art not only helps in understanding the roots of his art, but also casts light on the nature and competence of these influences. Pinter's output shows that realism lies at the root of drama and that the experiments of anti-theatre can only come into being by means of the parody of realistic elements and that these experiments have difficulty proliferating. Pinter's drama also shows that realism has the ability to reflect life and mirror the mood of thinking of the time more effectively than mere abstraction, once the realist selects the right experiences with which to create his art. A comprehensive and balanced reflection on experiences from life will always remain the goal for those who aim at creating great and lasting art.

Anti-theatre has achieved such a place of prominence in contemporary drama because its exponents, especially Beckett, have found new methods for expressing a "total" view of life and existence, but their art, as one can easily notice, has led to a stalemate. This is because these

playwrights have depended on abstract philosophical ideas about the universe, man, society, and language. These ideas are limited, as the content of their art reveals. Beckett's drama , as we have seen, deals with the enactment of existence, the attempts of man to prove his existence as he waits for his fate. Ionesco's plays centre on the theme of the illogical meaning of existence, the domination of violence and the oppression on the individual. Handke, in his turn, studies the nature of language and its influence on man. Moreover, the quantity of such a type of writing reveals the difficult nature of this art. Beckett has written only a small number of full-length plays, which cannot stand comparison with the output of other great modern dramatists such as, for instance, Ibsen , Chekhov or Brecht. Ionesco has written more full-length plays than Beckett, but can be seen as repeating himself once his formula of menace and irrationality becomes familiar. Peter Handke has also written very few anti-plays. To overcome the limitation in the content of their drama and to create an air of change, these playwrights have borrowed elements from other arts like painting, music, clown-acting, poetry and the stream-of-consciousness novel and replaced the narrative by creating an outlandish mise en scene. Beckett, for example, transposes his characters from the waiting on

the road in Godot, to the waiting in urns in Endgame, to the waiting in sand in Happy Days. The unrealistic mise en scene helps in creating theatrical variety while the general theme does not really change. This also applies to Beckett's short pieces, which employ different structures to express almost the same mood. The originality of anti-theatre lies in finding new forms to express old doubts about existence and human relationships. In other words, the anti-artists have found their freedom in the form and have lost much of it in the content.

On the other hand, realism is open to life with its unlimited experiences, yet it requires great skill from the playwright because he has to convince the audience that he is reflecting life and at the same time has to give them something new and interesting. The difficulty of realism lies in its selecting from the unlimited variety of experiences those few expressive ones which convey a picture of the different factors that interact in our existence. The best type of realism, in my view, is the one that achieves that totality. This does not mean that the artist should show that he is certain of everything, but he should try to consider all the clashing elements of every experience. Realism, as such, is difficult and not as easy

as those who revolted against it have claimed it to be. They appear to be right only when realism loses its totality and becomes involved merely in cheap entertainment . When the realistic style is mastered well the playwright can extend its limits to include both the mysterious and the familiar elements of life without making the audience lose interest. The experiences which the great realist chooses can touch upon deeper issues than those of abstract art. The impression which a play like Pinter's A Kind of Alaska can make on an audience is more effective than that of a play like Beckett's Happy Days because the audience can be more emotionally involved in the reality of the situation. One would imagine that if Beckett sat down to write a play about a woman on the sand of the Ethiopian desert who is counting the hours before she leaves the world and is reflecting on the human condition and people's treatment of one another, he would create a deeper feeling of life than the "intellectual" waiting of Winnie in Happy Days. The picture would be more impressive and include more intricate human elements.

Pinter has limited the scope of his realistic drama by making abstract phenomena similar to those used by the exponents of anti-theatre control the kind of action and experience of his characters. Such phenomena as menace, oppression, mental instability, sexual desire, stasis in life and deception formulate the behaviour of his characters. In other words, most of his characters have lost their freedom and what they do appears to be mechanical. Since Betrayal, however, the playwright has begun to give his characters more freedom and in A Kind of Alaska and Monologue the characters are completely free. It is interesting to notice how Pinter has moved more and more towards realism, and therefore one still expects a greater realism from this talented playwright, especially after his recent interest in contemporary international problems.

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